The background of the book cover is a soft, out-of-focus green. In the lower half, there are several yellow daisy-like flowers with dark brown centers, and some white flowers are visible in the bottom left corner. The title is written in a stylized, cursive font.

Change

Must Come from

Within

Dr. Amru Khalid

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To my beautiful daughter Wisal (Casawiyya) and to my handsome twin sons, Yasser and Youssef, I love you so much.

Introduction

In the Name of Allah ﷻ, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Praise belongs to Allah ﷻ, Nurturer and Sustainer of all worlds, and peace be upon Muhammad ﷺ, appointed as a messenger and mercy to mankind, and peace be upon his family and companions.

The trials and tribulations that are gripping the Islamic world have created a sense of loss and disorientation not only in the heart of the ordinary Muslim, but also in the heart of the people of wisdom.

What shall we do to overcome this hardship? How shall we rescue ourselves? How can we change this situation and where will this change come from?

Do not fall into despondency, and do not wash your hands of seeking change, for there is still light at the end of the tunnel. Hope exists in each of us. We must recover from our disease and we must have a role to play amongst the nations.

Each of us must contribute to this process of curing and revitalizing the Muslim nation according to his potentials,

for I am confident that each individual will succeed in doing so.

You, too, can do it and present something that can push our nation forward. You must, therefore, stand up as a Muslim who loves his Islamic religion and the land of Muslims.

The cure for the disease is inside us. How is that possible? It is possible when your heart resorts to the Qur'an and adopts it as its constitution and way of life.

So, let us seek the cure in the Qur'an, which is the constitution of this nation. May be we will find what we have lost, and may be we will change for the better.

Allah ﷻ says:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ﴾

«Verily, never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves.» (Ar-Ra'd:11)

If you closely consider the meaning of the verse, you will notice that the second part makes change possible, yet this change is conditional in the sense that it must come from us. This is a condition put forward by Allah ﷻ, the Creator of the Universe, and this means that once we fulfil the condition, Allah ﷻ will then change us for the better.

How can we change ourselves? We can only attain this by holding fast to the Rope of Allah ﷻ, showing our humbleness to Him, striving sincerely to become one nation, averting sins, and showing our utter trust in Allah ﷻ. Moreover, we should not harbour any grudges against Muslims, and we should be sincere in every step we take and every move we make. Time is of the essence, and we should not squander it in trivialities. Rather, it should be devoted to supporting the Muslims. We should stand firm in the face of hardships and aspire to martyrdom in the Way of Allah ﷻ. Finally, we should have a goal in life, and we should strive to attain it through seeking knowledge, hard work and steadfastness.

The verse: **«Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves.»** is a promise by Allah ﷻ, and you will soon see the Muslim nation retrieving its dignity, honour, might and supremacy.

The present work is neither an analysis of a contemporary political issue nor a detailed media coverage of a historic events. Rather, it is a message of hope and action plan that emanates from the heart and targets 'thirsty' hearts in need of quenching their thirst from the purity of Islam.

May Allah ﷻ make it a successful attempt.

Amru Khalid

Safar 1424 A.H

Humbleness to Allah ﷻ

Humbleness is Worship

Humbleness towards Allah ﷻ is one of the most significant acts of worship which bring one closer to Allah ﷻ. It is an *access* to display a sense of need for Allah ﷻ.

Humbleness is crying out with your heart and soul to Allah's ﷻ, shedding tears, raising your hands high and calling Allah ﷻ with every 'bit' of your body to rescue you.

Humbleness is supplicating Allah ﷻ with pain and humility.

Humbleness is an act of worship by people who are disoriented. So, let us learn and reiterate it in the same manner as done by a sailor whose skiff has been destroyed by the angry waves, and who has nothing left except a broken piece of life raft about to slip away from his hands. Have you heard his voice amidst the terrifying sound of waves? He is alone, yet he has hope though his heart is about to stop every time he says, 'O Lord! O Lord?' This is humbleness.

Humbleness in the Qur'an

Allah ﷻ says:

﴿وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمَمٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَأَخَذْنَاهُم بِالْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ
يَتَضَرَّعُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾ فَلَوْلَا إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا تَضَرَّعُوا وَلَٰكِن قَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ
وَزَيَّنَّ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ﴾

«Indeed, We sent nations before you, and We seized them with misery and hardship that haply they might be humble; if only, when Our Might came upon them, they had been humble! But their hearts were hard, and satan decked out fair to them what they were doing.» (Al-An'am:42-43)

Are we going to be like these nations in becoming selfishly humble only in time of adversity? No, we must show humbleness to Allah ﷻ at all times.

Imagine we are rescued from what we ask Allah ﷻ to rescue us from. Still, we hope not to be in the same situation as the people described in the following verse because, once rescued, they relapsed to their old ways of assigning associates to Allah ﷻ:

﴿قُلْ مَن يُنَجِّيكُم مِّن ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ تَدْعُونَهُ تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً إِن
أُخْسَا مِن هَٰذِهِ لَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ قُلِ اللَّهُ يُنَجِّيكُم مِّنهَا وَمِن
كُلِّ كَرْبٍ ثُمَّ أَنتُمْ مُنْفَرِّغُونَ﴾

«Say: 'Who delivers you from the shadows of land and sea? You call upon Him humbly and secretly, 'truly, if He delivers us from these, we shall be among the thankful.' Say: 'Allah delivers you from them and from every distress; then you assign Him associates.» (Al-An'am:63-64)

﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّن نَّبِيٍّ إِلَّا أَخَذْنَا أَهْلَهَا بِالْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ
يَضَرَّعُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾﴾

«We have sent no Prophet to any city but that We seized its people with misery and hardship, that haply they might be humble.» (Al-A'raf:94)

﴿أَفَأَمِنَ أَهْلُ الْقُرَىٰ أَن يَأْتِيَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا بَيِّنًا وَهُمْ نَائِمُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾ أَوَأَمِنَ
أَهْلُ الْقُرَىٰ أَن يَأْتِيَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا ضُحًى وَهُمْ يُلْعَبُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾﴾

«Do the people of the cities feel secure Our Might shall not come upon them at night while they are sleeping? Do the people of the cities feel secure Our Might shall not come upon them in daylight while they are playing?» (Al-A'raf:97-98)

These verses imply that a harsh retribution from Allah ﷻ awaits those who abstain from showing humbleness to Allah ﷻ. Taking people by surprise while they immersed in their joy or sleep- is not an easy matter. And only by adopting what people before us did to rescue themselves can we be rescued from distress and retribution. Again, it was humbleness that saved them.

﴿وَلَوْ رَحِمْنَاهُمْ وَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهِمْ مِنْ ضُرِّ اللَّجْوِ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ﴾

﴿وَلَقَدْ أَخَذْنَاهُمْ بِالْعَذَابِ فَمَا اسْتَكَانُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَمَا يَتَضَرَّعُونَ﴾

«If We had Mercy on them and removed the distress which is on them, they would obstinately persist in their transgression, wandering in distraction to and fro. We inflicted punishment on them, but they humbled not themselves to their Lord, nor do they submissively entreat (Him)!» (Al-Mu'minun:75-76)

Everyone is waiting for miracles to happen and everyone is seeking comfort at the expense of others who have sacrificed their lives in many parts of the world. We are being seized with distress and punishment by Allah ﷻ, and most of us would persistently not humble before Allah ﷻ.

We must go back to Allah ﷻ because Allah ﷻ inflicts misfortunes upon us so that we can return to and show humbleness towards Him. If we don't, things get worse and worse. Sometimes, we forget about worshipping, so Allah ﷻ invites us to it by inflicting misfortunes upon us. Do not give up hope, for there is always hope in Allah ﷻ, the Sustainer of everything in this universe, Who can change anything in split seconds.¹

﴿إِنَّمَا قَوْلُنَا لِشَيْءٍ إِذَا أَرَدْنَاهُ أَنْ نَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ﴾

«For to anything which we have willed, we but say the word, "Be", and it is.» (An-Nahl:40)

Humbleness is the Prophets' Act of Worship

Yunus عليه السلام is a case in point. Briefly, Yunus عليه السلام was swallowed in by a large fish, and was thus plunged into three layers of pitch darkness: the darkness of night, the darkness

¹ Italicised text hereinafter is the author's direct address to the listener/reader.

of sea, and the darkness inside the belly fish. However despite his utter distress, he did not give up, for he humbly called Allah ﷻ:

﴿وَدَا الْ نُونِ إِذْ دَهَبَ مُغَضِّبًا فَظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ فَنَادَىٰ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَنَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ﴾



«And remember Zun-nun (Yunus ﷺ), when he departed in wrath. He imagined that We had no power over Him! But he cried through the depths of darkness, “there is no god but You, glory to You. I was indeed wrong!”» (Al-Anbiyya:87)

And, in return, Allah ﷻ granted his request in a fraction of a second:

﴿فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْغَمِّ وَكَذَلِكَ نُصَيِّحُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾

«So we listened to him and delivered him from distress, and thus do we deliver those who have Faith.» (Al-Anbiyya:88)

A second case in point is Muhammad ﷺ. When Muhammad ﷺ was astounded by the large number of the enemy and heavy artillery at *Battle of Badr*, he raised his hands so high

that his garment dropped on the floor, and the whiteness of his armpit could be seen, calling Allah ﷻ:

“O Lord! If you destroy this group of Muslims, you will not be worshipped in the land.” At this point, Abu Bakr ؓ told him, ‘O Allah’s Messenger! Enough, for Allah ﷻ will honour what He ﷻ has promised you.’” (Muslim:4563)

The Importance of Humbleness and *Du'a* in Our Everyday Life

Man is at his best state when he invokes Allah ﷻ to keep away the whispers of satan. Invoking Allah ﷻ is what distinguishes us from other creatures. Invoking Allah ﷻ humbly reinvigorates us and gives us hope. In other words, the more humble one is the more his heart is filled in with light and his vision is protected against darkness.

In times such as these, man is in dire need of maintaining a close relationship with Allah ﷻ to shun the temptations that have beset man and turned human life into an unbearable hell. Only through seeking refuge in and being humble to Allah ﷻ can we rescue ourselves from the hardships and sufferings of the present time. Humbleness was the Prophets’ weapon.

At-Tirmidi reported: “The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘My Lord has offered to give me the wide plain of Makkah in gold, but I

said: 'No. I would rather have enough to eat one day and remain hungry one day. Thus, when I am hungry I would turn to You in earnest supplication and remembrance; and when I have my fill, I praise You and give thanks.' (At-Tirmidi: 2347)

Once Allah's Messenger ﷺ was asked about the night prayer, and he replied: "The night prayer is offered as two Rakat followed by two Rakat and so on. Sit between each two Rakat and say *tashahhud*. When you finish, raise and cup your hands, with the palms facing your face, and then say humbly and fearfully, 'O Lord! O Lord!' Whoever does not do this, he is branded as such and such person." (At-Tirmidi:385)

The Prophet ﷺ was asked: "**Which of the people are tested most severely?**" He ﷺ replied: "**The Prophets, then the righteous, then those who are most like them, then those who are most like them from the people. A man is tested according to his religious commitment. So, if his religious practice is sound, then his testing is increased, and if his religious practice is weak, then his testing is reduced. A servant continues to be tested until he walks the Earth without a single sin on him.**" (At-Tirmidi:2398)

So, you are not the only one who has been inflicted with trials, for prophets before you were, and their weapon to overcome the hardships was patience, perseverance and humbleness. Remember that man is inflicted with trials according to his religious commitment. Read the part of the Hadith which goes: "*A man is tested according to his religious commitment...*" I believe you will now accept Allah's ﷻ Preordainment (al-Qadar), will show patience and humbleness toward Allah ﷻ.

Abstaining from Humbleness is Part of Arrogance

Despite all this, our youth is still glued to the T.V. set watching indecent programs or glued to the computer screen chatting, exchanging jokes, listening to the latest songs or surfing pornographic sites. Do not they feel that danger is imminent? Do not they feel that death can strike at anytime?

Brothers and sisters! Seek refuge in Allah ﷻ and try to taste the sweetness of Faith in your hearts. Sense change in yourselves and Allah ﷻ will change your condition and ease your crisis.

We are the cause behind today's crisis in the world because of our ignorance, recklessness, haughtiness and injustice. Isn't it high time we pondered our actions and made change?

There is no other options to change our condition except by seeking refuge in Allah ﷻ. Allah ﷻ says:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ﴾

«Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves.» (Ar-Ra'd:11)

Humbleness is the Solution

We feel frustrated by the bleak status quo. Our brothers are dying every day and everywhere, and we are hopeless. The economic crisis is taking its toll, yet the youth do not know what to do. This is the reality our enemy has long wished to see. Our enemy is now cherishing our downfall, and it is down to us to rise and violate its expectations, proving to him (enemy) that we (Muslims) are a distinctive nation:

﴿كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ﴾

«You are the best nation ever brought to men...» (Al-Imran:110)

Only through humbleness can we retrieve our sacred territories and get back onto the right path. Humbleness is the solution and it is the least we can do. Only then will Allah ﷻ change our condition. Recall what Imam Ahmad

Ibn Hanbal once said: "Humble yourselves as a drowning person in the middle of the sea, clinging to a life raft."

I received an email from a young person that reminds me of a *Du'a* of humbleness which goes:

Allahumma inna zalamna anfusana fa'fu 'anna...Allahumma innaka anzalta fi kitabika ta'muruna an na'tiqar-riqab, Allahumma inna riqabana fi yadika fa'tughha...Allahumma innaka anzalta fi kitabika ta'muruna an laa narudda miskinana waqafa bibabina, Allahumma waqafna bibabika fala taruddana aw tatrudana...(O Lord, we have wronged ourselves, pardon us. O Lord, You command us in Your Book to manumit slaves. O Lord, our souls are in Your Hands, manumit them. O Lord, You command us in Your Book not to turn down a needy at our doors, O Lord, here we are standing at Your Door, do not turn us down or expel us...)

Allah ﷻ likes to hear the humble voices of His Servants. In fact, there are certain events during which we humble to Allah ﷻ, for instance, during the eclipse, drought, 'Arafat, etc...

Brothers and sisters, let us make our days like 'Arafaat so we can humble to Allah ﷻ with a pure, fearful heart, haply Allah ﷻ will have mercy on us and rescue us.

So, humble to Allah ﷻ, humble to Allah ﷻ, humble to Allah ﷻ and He ﷻ will rescue you.

The Nation's Unity

The Muslim Dilemma

It has been a sordid one for the last 100 years. The Muslim nation has been plunged in the depths of a series of crises; from moral decline to technological backwardness. However, the gravest of all these crises is being afar from the Way of Allah ﷻ. What are the causes and consequences of these crises? Many young people now suffer from some social diseases such as depression, failure in education, and despair. Our confidence has been shattered, and we began to derive our inspiration from the West. We began to imitate the West almost in everything, even in the way we eat, talk, dress and walk. Clearly, we are lost and we must change our condition:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ﴾

«Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves.» (Ar-Ra'd:11)

We may ask ourselves the following questions: How does change happen? What is the change that we aspire to?

So, humble to Allah ﷻ, humble to Allah ﷻ, humble to Allah ﷻ,
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«Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves.» (Ar-Ra'd:11)

We may ask ourselves the following questions: How does change happen? What is the change that we aspire to?

Change is a transition from one condition or state to a better one so that we can revert to our first condition when we were the masters of the universe.

Our Nation is the Most Magnificent on Earth

If another nation were in our shoes and agonisingly underwent the successive crises, it would have surely perished. We are still here, yet weak and subjugated. Allah ﷻ, nevertheless, says:

﴿وَرِيدُ أَنْ نَمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتُضِعُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَيْمَةً وَتَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ وَنُفَضِّلَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ﴾

«And we wished to be gracious to those who were being depressed in the land, to make them leaders (in Faith) and make them heirs, to establish a firm place for them in the land.» (Al-Qasas:5-6)

Indeed Lord, we are weak and hopeless. According to the verse, Allah ﷻ wishes to raise those weak and, imagine, those weak are the best nation on earth.

Our dream is to see the Muslim nation stand on its feet and regain its glorious status in the annals of history. This is not arrogance. Rather, it is a status which Allah ﷻ has attached

to it. In fact, Islam was the leader for more than thirteen centuries, during which life was better than it is now. More to the point, religions of the world do not enjoy the freedom and stability they did during that era. There were, of course, trials and errors, yet it was the best era.

Let us unite and revive our nation in the hope of bringing it back to its glory...and let us change our condition haply Allah ﷻ might make us triumphant and glorious.

Simply, the condition: **«...until they change it themselves.»**

Regaining our past glory does not mean leadership for the sake of tyranny and repression. On the contrary, it is for the sake of guaranteeing human bliss. This is the mission we carry on our shoulders and this is the mission Allah ﷻ has entrusted us with. Can we carry it out?

May be that sounds absurd given the sordid circumstances, but of course we can carry out our mission. One might argue that people were in the same position as we are in now and were unable to find a way out. We dismiss their claims and say to them, "we must build our confidence and have *one* conviction that Allah ﷻ has promised us change, though conditional: **«...until they change it themselves.»**"

This is the law of change, the hope and the *only* solution to overcome our present crisis.

What's the Evidence?

When Allah ﷻ created this universe, He ﷻ enacted laws to regulate it, and these laws exist so long as we exist. But, what are these laws? These laws exist in every aspect of life: in human behaviour, on earth, etc... And if we wish to lead life on this earth, we must adopt these laws because they are part of life.

Take for instance a person standing at the top of the mountain and wishes to fly. He will be told there is the gravity law which will cause him to fall down and break his limbs. He will be taken to hospital and told by the doctor to take some medication and he will recover in three weeks. Is the doctor a supernatural being? Of course not, but he knows the laws of medicine.

There is also the law of social conduct, and whoever adopts it shall take the lead. What is this law? It is the verse:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ﴾

«Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves.» (Ar-Ra'd:11)

Once we change, we shall lead the world tomorrow.

Every day, we question our condition, saying: Why are we the way we are? Why can't we be victorious? We will not even dream of victory because there is a law like the one of

gravity which is absent from our life. Once this law is implemented, Allah ﷻ will change our condition. The laws are causes which we should use and then get results.

So, this law:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ﴾

«Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves.» (Ar-Ra'd:11)

is not a slogan; it is a verse, it is the Word of Allah ﷻ.

How Can We Achieve Our Purpose?

To achieve our goal, we need to fulfil two conditions:

First: The Law

Second: Implementation Will

This law was in fact implemented by the Prophet ﷺ and his companions, and that is why they were able to lead the Muslim world for 25 years despite the fact that they were in a darkness worse than ours.

Brothers and sisters, we must have this conviction: change is a long and strenuous process, but we should set out on our journey now.

Do not fall into despondency and do not let the fear of failure deter you from trying to regain your glory. It is just a matter of knowing how to manipulate the law. Once we know how to deal with this law, we shall be able to attain our glory. But, because we neglected it, the West came and took over the mission of learning and implementing it. However, the West has not manipulated this law to the full, and that is why it will only lead for a limited period of time. He who knows how to use the law to the full shall lead the longest.

Do Not Be Selfish

Islam advocates altruism and condemns selfness. It is high time we replaced the 'I', 'me', and 'mine' with 'we', 'us' and 'our', and strive to achieve this unity. Hence, our religion lays down four settings:

The First Setting (the largest): The Muslim Nation. Allah ﷻ says:

﴿إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاتَّبِعُونِ﴾

«Verily, this brotherhood of yours is a single brotherhood, and I am your Lord and Cherisher; therefore, serve me (and no other).» (Al-Anbiyya':92)

﴿وَإِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاتَّقُونِ﴾

«And verily, this brotherhood of yours is a single brotherhood, and I am your Lord and Cherisher. Therefore, fear me (and no other).» (Al-Mu'minun:52)

The Second Setting: Love for one's Country. Love for one's country is part of Islam. When the Prophet ﷺ was expelled from Makka, he tearfully looked back and said: "By Allah ﷻ. You are the most beloved land, and had not your people expelled me, I would have never left you." (At-Tirmidi:3925)

The Third Setting: The family. Allah ﷻ commands us to be kind to our parents and to visit our kin.

The Fourth Setting (the smallest): The Neighbours. The Prophet ﷺ said: "Gabriel ﷺ kept on reminding me of taking care of one's neighbour until I thought he was going to include him in the list of heirs." (Abu Daud: 5151, At-Tirmidi:1942)

Observe how warm these settings are: My nation, my country, my family, my neighbours. Do you know where our disunity comes from? The spirit of community was superseded by a sense of individualism.

In contrast, observe how the West promotes this sense of community: The European Community, the European Union, The Euro as one European single currency, One European Visa (Shengen), the United Nations, and the list goes on. They have implemented part of the law, and were thus risen

atop. Dissimilarly, we have been obsessed with the 'I' and are thus at the bottom of the pyramid of nations.

Islam is a Religion of Unity

Allah ﷻ gathers and unites us five times a day to perform the congregational prayers and once every Friday. During Ramadan, the entire nation fasts for thirty days each year, breaks the fast and celebrate the Eid at the same time. At the pilgrimage season, we unite for 10 days to observe the rituals. We wear the same white garment, perform the same rituals, and reiterate the same words: *Labbayka Allahumma Labbayka*. Even our religion has the name *At-Tawhid* (monotheism). The Prophet ﷺ said: "The example of the Muslims is like a body, if one part of it gets hurt, then all of the body shares that hurt [like a body stricken] with a fever and no sleeping." Then he ﷺ said, "The Believer to another Believer is like a building [or structure]. [He then brought his hands together with his fingers intertwined.]" (Muslim:6528 and At-Tirmidi:1928)

This is our religion! Let us be selfless and say: We are for the nation...my aim is my nation even at the expense of my family.

O Lord, My People, My People

Note what the Prophet ﷺ, who represents the unity of the Muslim nation, was saying in tears: "O Lord, my people, my people." In response, Gabriel ﷺ descended and informed

him, "Allah ﷻ assures you that He will not let you down." The Prophet ﷺ said: "Every Prophet has a request that is fulfilled, and I want to reserve my request of intercession for my Community for the Day of Judgment." (Muslim:490 and At-Tirmidi:3602)

Some Muslim Role Models

Jabir Ibn Abdullah ﷺ

Jabir ﷺ reported: "We were digging (the trench) on the day of (*Al-Khandaq* (i.e. Trench)) and we came across a big solid rock. We went to the Prophet ﷺ and said, "Here is a rock appearing across the trench." He said, "I am coming down." Then he got up, and a stone was tied to his belly for we had not eaten anything for three days. So the Prophet ﷺ took the spade and struck the big solid rock and it became like sand. I said, "O Allah's Messenger! Allow me to go home." (When the Prophet ﷺ allowed me) I said to my wife, "I saw the Prophet ﷺ in a state that I cannot treat lightly. Have you got something (for him) to eat?" She replied, "I have barley and a she-goat." So I slaughtered the she-kid and she ground the barley; then we put the meat in the earthenware cooking pot. Then I came to the Prophet ﷺ when the dough had become soft and fermented and (the meat in) the pot over the stone trivet had nearly been well-cooked, and said, "I have got a little food prepared, so get up O Allah's Messenger, you and

one or two men along with you (for the food)." The Prophet ﷺ asked, "How much is that food?" I told him about it. He said, "It is abundant and good. Tell your wife not to remove the earthenware pot from the fire and not to take out any bread from the oven till I reach there." Then he said (to all his companions), "Get up." So the Muhajirin (i.e. emigrants) and the Ansar got up. When I came to my wife, I said, "Allah's ﷻ Mercy be upon you! The Prophet ﷺ came along with the Muhajirin and the Ansar and those who were present with them." She said, "Did the Prophet ﷺ ask you (how much food you had)?" I replied, "Yes." Then the Prophet ﷺ said, "Enter and do not throng." The Prophet ﷺ started cutting the bread (into pieces) and put the cooked meat over it. He covered the earthenware pot and the oven whenever he took something out of them. He would give the food to his companions and take the meat out of the pot. He went on cutting the bread and scooping the meat (for his companions) till they all ate their fill, and even then, some food remained. Then the Prophet ﷺ said (to my wife), "Eat and present to others as the people are struck with hunger." (*Al-Bukhari*:3070 and *Muslim*:5283)

Omar Ibn Al-Khattab ﷺ

Every time he saw small children, he would hug them so tightly that their heads knocked one another, saying: "I want you to be like that all the time."

During his last moment, Omar ؓ was bleeding heavily and he was unconscious for a while. When he came to, he said to those around him, 'Have people prayed?'

Jaafar's Ibn Abu Talib's ؓ Orphans

When he was martyred, the Prophet ﷺ took his children and asked people who would take care of Jaafar's children. One said, 'I will'. Another said, 'I will', and a third said, 'I will'. The three of them were poor. Do not be surprised by the three people's volunteering to look after Jaafar's children, for because of his love for the Muslim nation and his care towards it, the Prophet ﷺ gave him the name *the father of the needy*. (*At-Tirmidi*:3766 and *Ibn Majja*: 4125)

Read about the life of the companions (*As-Sahaba*), especially the *Muhajirun* (emigrants) and *al-Ansar* (Supporters) and see how all the emigrations in history ended up in shedding their blood, with the exception of one – when *al-Muhajirun* went to *al-Ansar*. The latter gave them a warm welcome and said to them: Let us divide everything in half: home, food and dress.

Salahuddin did not smile for a very long time. When asked the reason why, he replied, "How can I smile while *al-Quds* is under siege. I really feel embarrassed to smile before Allah ﷻ while my brothers are being tortured."

Brothers and sisters, we shall live and exist for the nation's sake and forget about thinking and being obsessed with the 'I'. If we just think about the 'I', we shall live short, but if we think about our nation, we shall live longer.

Shunning Sins

"There is not an affliction that befalls man but that it is caused by a sin, and won't be lifted except by repentance."
(Ali ؑ)

It is high time we stopped committing sins and humbly declared our sincere repentance to Allah ﷻ. Let us regret our misdeeds, and call upon Allah ﷻ to forgive us and make us triumphant. Will he ﷻ accept our repentance? Of course, He ﷻ will because He is the Most Merciful towards His Servants.

Remember that afflictions are the result of our misdeeds as Ali ؑ pointed out, and will only be overcome if we repent. A young man once said to me that perhaps the hardships we are enduring now are the result of his sins, because he knew what his sins were. I was not expecting his direct honesty, which implies that if we come to grips with our sins we will surely change.

Sinning is the Cause of the Nations' Downfall

Remember that peoples before Islam were destroyed because of their sin. What expelled Adam ؑ from Paradise? It was

sin. What expelled Iblis from Paradise? It was sin. What drowned Nuh's ٧٧٧ people? It was sin:

﴿فَفَتَحْنَا أَبْوَابَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَاءٍ مُنْهَرٍ ۖ وَفَجَّرْنَا الْأَرْضَ عُيُونًا فَالْتَقَى الْمَاءُ عَلَى أَمْرٍ قَدْ قُدِرَ﴾

«So we opened the gates of heaven, with water pouring forth. And we caused the earth to gush forth with springs, so the waters met (and rose) to the extent decreed.» (Al-Qamar:11-12)

What drowned the Pharaoh and his army? It was sin:

﴿فَأَخَذَتْهُ وَجُنُودُهُ فَنَبَذْنَاهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ ۖ فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَتْ عَاقِبَةُ الظَّالِمِينَ﴾

«So we seized him and his hosts, and we flung them into the sea. Now behold what was the end of those who did wrong.» (Al-Qasas:40)

Ponder what happened to Lut's ٧٧٧ people? It was sin. Angel Gabriel ٧٧٧ lifted with one of his wings the entire city then overturned it; so much so that the angels could hear the barking of dogs:

﴿فَجَعَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمَا سَافِلَهَا ۖ وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةً مِّن سِجِّيلٍ﴾

«And we turned (the cities) upside down, and rained down on them brimstones hard as baked clay.» (Al-Hijr:74)

Ponder what happened to the unprecedented creatures 'people o Ad'. Allah ٧٧٧ swept them away with a fierce hurricane:

﴿فَارْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِم رِيحًا وَجُنُودًا أَلَمْ تَرَوْهَا ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرًا﴾

«But we sent against them a hurricane and forces that you saw not, but Allah sees (clearly) all that you do.» (Al-Ahzab:9) This was the result of sin.

Ponder what happened to the Children of Israel:

﴿إِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ أُولَاهُمَا بَعَثْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ عِبَادًا لَّنَا أُولَى بَأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ فَحَاسُوا خِلَالَ الدِّيَارِ ۚ وَكَانَ وَعْدًا مَّفْعُولًا﴾

«When the first of the warnings came to pass, we sent against you Our servants given to terrible warfare. They entered the very inmost parts of your homes; and it was a warning (completely) fulfilled.» (Al-Isra:5)

You see now brother and sister how sins are behind our destruction. They are the sins of the present and past. They

are the sins of one hundred years ago which have caused our nations' crisis and suffering.

The Prophet ﷺ said: "When sins prevail in my people, Allah ﷻ shall impose His punishment." (Imam Ahmad, *Al-Musnad*, 6/303)

Sins destroy nations. When the Muslims conquered Cyprus and the Romans were expelled, and there were a lot of jubiliations occasioned by the victory, Abu Darda ؓ, one of the revered companions, was moved to tears. He was asked the reason why and he said: "I am crying over a nation that disobeyed Allah ﷻ, and was perished and replaced by another one."

Do we understand the law now? Sins destroy nations. However, because Allah ﷻ loves us, He ﷻ sends His Warning signals through crises and disasters.

Earthquakes are a Mercy Upon the Believers

Anas Ibn Malik ؓ asked Aisha: "Tell me about earthquakes." She replied, 'They strike when fornication, drinking alcohol, and serious sins prevail in a nation. Allah ﷻ will say to the earth, 'Shake them.' Anas ؓ asked, 'Is it a form of punishment to them?' 'No. By Allah! It is a mercy upon and advice to the believers, but a wrath upon the disbelievers.'"

The Prophet ﷺ said: "Beware trivial sins, for they keep accumulating until they destroy a person." (Imam Ahmad, *Al-Musnad*:5/331)

Anas Ibn Malik ؓ said: "You commit acts which may seem to you as thin as hair, but which we would consider as grave during the Prophet's ﷺ life time." Allah ﷻ says:

﴿إِذْ تَلَقَّوْنَهُ بِأَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَتَقُولُونَ بِأَفْوَاهِكُمْ مَا لَيْسَ لَكُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ

وَتَحْسِبُونَهُ هَيِّنًا وَهُوَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمٌ﴾

﴿Behold, you received it on your tongues, and said out of your mouths things of which you had no knowledge; and you thought it to be a light matter, while it was most serious in the sight of Allah.﴾ (An-Nuur:15)

Statistically, this was 20 years after the Prophet's ﷺ death. How can we measure them in our time?

Brothers and sisters! We must change ourselves and, believe me, Allah ﷻ will only bestow victory on His Pious Nation. These are the laws Allah ﷻ has set:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ﴾

﴿Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves.﴾ (Ar-Ra'd:11)

Do Not Underestimate Allah ﷻ...

Ibn Al-Qayyim said: "Allah ﷻ makes you hate a sin and makes it unbearable. The Prophet ﷺ said, 'Do not feel secure after a sin.' This means that no sin committed will escape punishment. And your joy over a sin is worse in the sight of Allah ﷻ than the sin itself. Allah ﷻ says:

﴿فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ أَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فَرِحُوا بِمَا أُوتُوا أَخَذْنَاهُم بَغْتَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْلِسُونَ﴾

«We opened unto them the gates of everything until, when they rejoiced in what they were given, We seized them suddenly, and behold, they were sore confounded.»
(*Al-Ana'm:44*)."

According to Ibn Al-Qayyim, your joy over committing a sin is more serious to Allah ﷻ than the sin itself, your laughter during the act of sinning is more serious to Allah ﷻ than the sin itself, and your shamelessness from the angel sitting on your right and the other on your left as they look at you and record your sins is more serious to Allah ﷻ than the sin itself."

Do not underestimate Allah's ﷻ Might. If you notice that He ﷻ still bestows blessings upon you despite your

persistence in sinning, do not dance for joy. Watch out! Allah ﷻ is only leading you to your downfall. You may persist in sinning, and then leave out repentance in the knowledge that you will escape unpunished. This is wrong. Keep on fearing Allah ﷻ, and remember that any crisis we go through is a trial from Allah ﷻ.

The Effects of Sin

First: Allah's ﷻ Wrath

Allah ﷻ says in a *Hadith Qudsi*: "I am Allah and there is no god except Me. If I am obeyed, I am content...If I am disobeyed, I become angry. If I become angry, I curse, and my curse reaches the seventh of the off-springs."

Second: Hatred for the Believers

Ash-Shafi'i said: "Be careful of unknowingly incurring the curse of the believers' hearts upon you." How can a person who hates the believers be cursed by the hearts of the believers whilst he does not know it? He disobeys Allah ﷻ and as a result, Allah ﷻ cast in the hearts of the believers hatred towards him."

Third: Deprivation of Provision (*rizq*)

A servant is deprived of provision due to sinning. It is said that sinning takes away provision.

Fourth: Deprivation of Knowledge

Imam Malik said to Imam Ash-Shafi'i: "Allah ﷻ has lit up your face with knowledge, so do not put such light out with sin. One of them complained about the hurdles he had been facing in trying to memorize the Qur'an and acquire knowledge, saying in the following lines of verse:

I complained to Waki' about my stumbling in the Qur'an and he advised me to shun sins, saying: knowledge is light, and Allah's ﷻ Light cannot be earned by a sinner

Fifth: Gravity of Crisis

Ali ﷺ said: "There is not an affliction that befalls man but that it is caused by a sin, and won't be lifted except by repentance."

Sixth: Estrangement from Allah ﷻ

One feels estranged from Allah ﷻ and does not know how to get close to Him ﷻ.

Seventh: Estrangement from People

One feels isolated from people despite being among friends, family and relatives. A scholar once beautifully summarised the effects of sin as follows: I can see the effect of my sin in my wife, children and beast's behaviour. The beast refuses

to move, my children mistreat me, and my wife disobeys me. Why is this happening? It is the result of sin.

Eighth: Grey face and heart

Ibn Abbas ﷺ said: "A sin darkens both the face and heart, incurs people's hatred, weakens the body and cuts back provision. Obeying Allah ﷻ, in contrast, turns the face pleasant, the heart healthy, earns a person love from others, strengthens the body and increases provision."

Ninth: Deprivation of Worship

For example, you intend to wake up for the Dawn Prayer (*Salat al-Fajr*), but you feel unable to do so.

Tenth: Chain Reaction

One sin leads to another until sinning becomes a chain reaction.

Eleventh: You Become Hateful to Allah ﷻ

The believer is dear to Allah ﷻ, but when he sins, he becomes hateful. Al-Hasan Al-Basri said: "People become hateful to Allah ﷻ once they sin, and if they were dear, He ﷻ would have protected them."

Twelfth: Humility in the Heart

Allah ﷻ says:

﴿مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعِزَّةَ فَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ جَمِيعًا﴾

﴿If any do seek for glory and power, to Allah belong all glory and power.﴾ (Fathir:10)

Some people dress smartly, drive luxurious cars and are feared by people. However, the humility of sin cannot be disentangled from their heart. In fact, being afar from Allah ﷻ and indulgence in sin is humility.

Thirteenth: Weakness of Mind

A scholar once said: "Whosoever sins, part of his mind goes away and will only return on the Day of Judgement."

Fourteenth: Sowing the Seeds of Destruction

﴿ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ

بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ﴾

﴿Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of men have earned, that ((Allah)) may give them a taste of some of their deeds in order that they may turn back (from evil).﴾ (Ar-Rum:41)

﴿وَمَا ظَلَمْنَاهُمْ وَلَكِنْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ﴾

﴿It was not we that wronged them. They wronged their own souls.﴾ (Hud:101)

Fifth: Being Betrayed By Your Own Tongue

Your tongue will betray you on the day you are in dire need of it. How? It is your inability to utter the words of *Shahada* during your last moment (death). It will be said to you: "Say, there is no god but Allah Alone," and you will reply, 'I cannot.' You will be asked: "Do you know it?" You will reply, "Yes, I do, but cannot utter it." Do you know why you will not be able to utter it? It is because you have been a sinner.

It is as if though a rock has been placed on the tongue. Imagine you will not be able to state *Shahada* as you lay dying!! It is very serious. Isn't it high time we kept away from sinning and came closer to Allah ﷻ?

Beware Secret Sins

The Prophet ﷺ said: "I know people from my nation will come on the Day of Judgment with good deeds, white like *Tuhama* mountains, but Allah ﷻ will turn them into scattered dust (reject their deeds). Thawban asked, "Describe them to us so we can know who they are lest we are among them and we do not know it." The Prophet ﷺ said, "They are your own fellowmen, and they pray at night just like you do. However, they are the type of people who, when out of sight, violate Allah's ﷻ Laws." (Ibn Majja:42245)

What can we do to resist sin?

First, you should have a good intention to abstain from sinning. Second, have good company: befriend the believers, and do acts that are beneficial to Islam and Muslims. Once you find yourself busy with these acts, you will not be able to commit sins. Good company and good acts are the optimum ways to resist sin.

Being Positive

There are a number of gaps that need bridging in our society. By society it is meant you, me and the other; our children and neighbours. Aren't we the constituents of this society? Of course, we are. So, isn't the chaos in society the result of our action? But the urgent question is: Do we realize this? Of course, many people wonder, 'Society is not my problem. Shall I repair all the damage in society?'

It goes without saying that it is not possible to do it by yourself. We will work together to build a society whose members exist in harmony and are merciful towards one another. Let us now see how we can achieve this goal.

Nations have dreams and ambitions, but these are only achieved after the passage of time. Such dreams and ambitions may seem far-fetched for some, but utopian for others and, thus, achievable whatever it takes.

Look around you and note the vices that fill in our life: lies, corruption, thefts, garbage on the roadside, adultery, and the list goes on. Yet, each of us is pointing the fingers of blame to the other, reiterating the age-old phrase: "Will people

change if I do?" This is an underestimation of the matter. *All that glitters is not gold.* Outwardly, such person may look fine, perhaps the right person to emulate, but inwardly, he is corrupt and a liar. His children speak vulgarities, and garbage is piled up at his doorstep. For him, this is not important. Appearance is what matters to him.

It is a pity to consider this as an easy matter. May be it is not when only a small segment of society is affected, because we can rest assured that this may be repairable. But, when it is society as a whole, then it is a cause for concern. How can we solve this problem?

Why the Negative Attitude 'I cannot change society by myself?'

Still, being positive entails the correct implementation of laws. Simply put, let's not be overexcited about change without keeping in check the laws that we must correctly and painstakingly implement. We should be cautious and wise in every move we make so we can change from the ridiculous to the sublime. We must approach people in an inviting rather than an unappealing fashion. Your style of inviting people to change may put them off. Allah ﷻ says:

﴿ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ﴾

«Invite (all) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching.» (An Nahl:125)

The method of preaching is just as important. Allah ﷻ says:

﴿وَجِدْلُهُمْ بِأَلْفَىٰ هَيَّ أَحْسَنَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ﴾

«...and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious, for your Lord knows best who have strayed from His path, and who receive guidance.» (An-Nahl:125)

We must change and we must be positive. However unless we —members of society— work hand in hand, change will never take place. If you yourself cannot be exemplary for your children, how are you going to lecture them about change? Therefore, we condemn the negative attitude: "My stance will not change society." On the contrary, your position will change the entire society.

Change —trust me— will take place soon by many people, especially the youth who have been drawing a clear road map. Strive to change yourselves so that Allah ﷻ will ease your crisis and dispel your grief and fears. The nation's positive attitude starts from your positive attitude, and will re-stand on its feet, steering itself away from desires and fantasies. Allah ﷻ says:

﴿وَاتَّقُوا فِتْنَةً لَا تُصِيبَنَّ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْكُمْ خَاصَّةً وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ﴾

«And fear tumult or oppression, which affected not in particular (only) those of you who do wrong: and know that Allah is strict in punishment.» (Al-Anfaal:25)

Punishment for whom? For the wrongdoers who have pursued desires and temptations.

Brothers and sisters! Isn't it high time we changed our inner self? Isn't everyone's goal happiness? Of course, it is. So, if this religion guarantees this happiness in this life and the Hereafter, what are we waiting for? By Allah ﷻ! I can hear the pounding of some hearts, wanting to change but need support. They need someone to guide them to the doorstep of piety. So, let's aid each other to attain this noble cause so that peace may prevail and make us forget the scars of wars, adversities and disasters which have now become part and parcel of our everyday life.

The Reward earned by one person equals that earned by fifty people

The Prophet ﷺ was with his companions at a graveyard when he said: "Peace upon you believers. We will surely join you. I wish we could see our brothers." "Aren't we your brothers?" The companions wondered. "No, you are my

companions. Our brothers are those who didn't come." (Muslim: No.583)

Another Hadith says: "The days of perseverance are ahead of you, when a patient person is like one holding a piece of glowing charcoal lump in his hand. During those difficult days, a man who does good will receive a reward equals to that of fifty men." "O Messenger! Fifty men amongst them or us?" "Fifty men amongst you." (At-Tabarani, Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir, 22/220)

What a beautiful language and what a promising tone! The reward of fifty companions! May Allah ﷻ make us amongst them. Are you still saying, 'Change is not my responsibility.' Let's not be arrogant. Let's bravely face up to our status quo so that we wake up from our slumber and come to grips with our loss.

A Nation is bound to perish when its bad people outnumber its good ones

Aishah asked the Prophet ﷺ: "Do we perish even though there are some pious amongst us?" He replied: "Yes, if immorality prevails." (Muslim: 7164)

According to another Hadith, Allah ﷻ commanded Gabriel ﷺ to destroy a city, but the latter hesitated, saying: "O Lord, there is Your so and so servant praying (standing and prostrating). Allah ﷻ said, 'Start with him.' Gabriel ﷺ

wondered, 'Why Lord?' "Because he has never blushed or feel ashamed for My Sake."

Why on earth? Because when trials strike, they befall everyone. Therefore, we shall all perish if trials strike and if we do not strive to change.

In order to be positive, you should hail unity rather than individualism as the Muslim nation's motto by not hiding in mosques and claiming 'change takes place outside and it is somebody else's responsibility'. Let us understand our religion deeply. Let us invite people to Islam adopting wisdom. Let us invite people to abstain from committing sins and to sacrifice their own self and wealth for the Sake of Allah ﷻ. Omar ؓ said: "Cities are about to perish whilst full of inhabitants. 'How does that happen?' people asked, 'When bad people outnumber its good ones.'"

If the sin is concealed, it will only harm the sinner. If it is disclosed and people do not react to change it, it will affect everyone. The Prophet ﷺ said: "By Him in Whose Hand is my soul! You either enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, or else, Allah ﷻ will inflict upon you punishment; you will ask Allah ﷻ to stop the punishment, but He ﷻ will not grant your request." (At-Tirmidi:2169)

This is alarming. Isn't it our condition today? Don't we make supplications to Allah ﷻ, and when He does not respond, we despair?

Alas! Our patience has run out, and there is no way out except going back to Allah ﷻ and arming ourselves with patience so that we can surmount our crises.

Which of The Two Changes Comes First?

The verse:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ﴾

«Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves.» (Ar-Ra'd:11) refers to two types of change: change that comes from ourselves and change that comes from Allah ﷻ, but which one precedes the other?

Clearly, changing ourselves comes first. There is, to begin with, changing ourselves, then changing society. Simply put, changing your behaviour and attitude is conducive to changing society. From this standpoint, you are an important part of society; you contribute to its rise as well as to its downfall.

Do not tardy in your mission. Let's reject the negative thinking and strive towards changing ourselves so that Allah

ﷺ will assist us in changing our pitiable status quo which is the fruit of our own actions. Allah ﷻ is well-aware of our good intentions for change.

Ponder the positive thinking inferred from the Prophet's ﷺ Hadith: "The likeness of the man who observes the limits prescribed by Allah ﷻ and that of the man who transgresses them is like the people who get on board a ship after casting lots. Some of them are in its lower deck and some of them in its upper (deck). When those in its lower (deck) require water, they go to the occupants of the upper deck, and say to them : 'If we make a hole in the bottom of the ship, we shall not harm you.' If they (the occupants of the upper deck) leave them to carry out their design they will all be drowned. But if they do not let them go ahead (with their plan), all of them will remain safe". (Al-Bukhari:2493 and At-Tirmidi: 2173)

Metaphorically, the Prophet ﷺ likened the ship to society. Just as the results of damaging a ship are immediate, for instance, sinking and wreckage, so are those of destroying a society. And though the results of destruction are tangibly felt over time, the society will still be destroyed through breaking the laws. Take note: the next generation will entirely perish if we break the laws through our carelessness and negligence. So, let's be cautious and get rid of the seeds that we carry of our own destruction.

Two Positive Examples From the Qur'an

First: The Believer Among the Pharaohs:
The Pharaoh said:

﴿ذَرُونِي أَقْتُلْ مُوسَى وَلْيَدْعُ رَبَّهُ إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يُبَدِّلَ دِينَكُمْ أَوْ أَنْ يُظْهِرَ فِي الْأَرْضِ الْفَسَادَ﴾

«Leave me to slay Moses; and let him call on his Lord! What I fear is lest he should change your religion, or lest he should cause mischief to appear in the land!" (Al-Mu'minun:26)

A believer from the Pharaohs who concealed his faith protested:

﴿أَتَقْتُلُونَ رَجُلًا أَنْ يَقُولَ رَبِّيَ اللَّهُ﴾

«Will you slay a man because he says, 'My Lord is Allah?" (Mu'minun:28)

﴿فَسَتَذْكُرُونَ مَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ وَأَفَؤُضُ أَمْرِي إِلَى اللَّهِ﴾

«Soon will you remember what I say to you (now), my (own) affair I commit to Allah. For Allah (ever) watches over His Servants." (Ghafir:44)

Indeed, being positive is committing your affairs to Allah ﷻ after changing yourself and completely submitting yourself to Him. Hence, the results:

﴿فَوَقَّهَ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتٍ مَا مَكَرُوا﴾

«Then Allah saved him from (every) ill that they plotted (against him).» (Ghafir:45)

And do you still fear for your children after you have gone (died) whilst Allah ﷻ exists?

﴿وَلْيَخْشَ الَّذِينَ لَوْ تَرَكَوْا مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّةً ضِعَفًا خَافُوا عَلَيْهِمْ﴾

﴿فَلْيَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْيَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا﴾

«And let those fear who, if they left behind them weak seed, would be afraid of their account, and let them fear Allah, and speak words hitting the mark.» (An-Nissa:9)

Second: The Believer in Surat Yasin

Allah ﷻ sent two messengers to a city to invite its people to Islam, but people arrogantly refused. In response, Allah ﷻ sent a third one:

﴿إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمُ اثْنَيْنِ فَكَذَّبُوهُمَا فَعَزَّزْنَا بِثَالِثٍ فَقَالُوا إِنَّا إِلَهُكُمُ

مُرْسَلُونَ﴾

«When we (first) sent to them two apostles, they rejected them, but we strengthened them with a third. They said, "Truly, we have been sent on a mission to you."» (Yasin:14)

﴿وَجَاءَ مِنْ أَقْصَا الْمَدِينَةِ رَجُلٌ يَسْعَى قَالَ يَنْتَوِعُوا وَاتَّبِعُوا أَلْمُرْسَلِينَ﴾

«Then, there came running, from the farthest part of the city, a man, saying, "O My people! Obey the apostles.» (Yasin:20)

We can infer from the above verse that guiding people to the right path is not just the apostles' duty, but it is also ours. The man who came running added:

﴿اتَّبِعُوا مَنْ لَا يَسْأَلُكُمْ أَجْرًا وَهُمْ يُهْتَدُونَ ﴿٢١﴾ وَمَا لِيَ لَا أَعْبُدَ الَّذِي
فَطَرَنِي وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ أَأَتَّخِذُ مِنْ دُونِهِ آلِهَةً إِنْ يُرْزَقَ الْرِزْقُ
بِضَرٍّ لَا تُغْنِ عَنِّي شَفَاعَتُهُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُنْقِذُونِ ﴿٢٣﴾﴾

﴿“Obey those who ask no reward of you (for themselves), and who have themselves received guidance. “It would not be reasonable on me if I did not serve Him who created me, and to Whom you shall (all) be brought back. “Shall I take (other) gods besides Him? If ((Allah)) Most gracious should intend some adversity for me, of no use whatever will be their intercession for me, nor can they deliver me.﴾ (Yasin:21-23)

In fact, this is the true belief in Allah ﷻ, and this is the positive thinking through which Allah ﷻ has dignified the Muslim nation and this religion before and after Muhammad ﷺ.

Another example from the Qur'an that does not involve a human, but an animal:

﴿فَمَكَتْ غَيْرَ بَعِيدٍ فَقَالَ أَحَطْتُ بِمَا لَمْ نَحْطُ بِهِ وَجِئْتُكَ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ

بِنَبَأٍ يَقِينٍ﴾

﴿But the hoopoe tarried not far. He (came up and) said: “I have compassed (territory) which you haven't compassed, and I have come to you from Saba with tidings true.﴾ (An-Naml:22)

This is an example of a bird who was sad about, even jealous, for Allah's ﷻ religion when it saw people worshipping other than Allah ﷻ:

﴿إِنِّي وَجَدْتُ امْرَأَةً تَمْلِكُهُمْ وَأُوتِيَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَلَهَا عَرْشٌ
عَظِيمٌ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَجَدْتُهَا وَقَوْمَهَا يَسْجُدُونَ لِلشَّمْسِ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَزَيَّنَ
لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَلَهُمْ فَصَدَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ فَهُمْ لَا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾﴾

﴿“I found (there) a woman ruling over them and provided with every requisite; and she has a magnificent throne. “I found her and her people worshipping the sun besides Allah. Satan has made their deeds seem pleasing in their eyes, and has kept them away from the Path, so they receive no guidance.﴾ (An-Naml:23-24)

It (the bird) reported the incident to Sulayman ﷺ, and furnished him with compelling evidence on their acts. The result was astonishing: they immediately changed.

﴿أَلَّا يَسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ الَّذِي خَرَجَ الْخَبَّ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَيَعْلَمُ
مَا تُخْفُونَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُونَ﴾ (25)

“(Kept them away from the Path), that they should not worship Allah, who brings to light what is hidden in the heavens and the earth, and knows what you hide and what you reveal.” (An-Naml:25)

This is how we should be. We should be jealous for our religion and follow in the footsteps of the ‘bird’.

The Ant is Positive and Promotes a Spirit of Community

Note Sulayman’s ﷺ gratefulness to Allah ﷻ was triggered by an ant:

﴿حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَتَوْا عَلَىٰ وَادِ النَّمْلِ قَالَتْ نَمْلَةٌ يَأْتِيهَا النَّمْلُ أَخْلُو
مَسْكَنَكُمْ لَا تَحْطِمَنَّكُمْ سُلَيْمَنُ وَجُنُودُهُ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٦١﴾
فَتَبَسَّامًا صَاحِكًا مِّنْ قَوْلِهَا وَقَالَ رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي
أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَدْخِلْنِي
بِرَحْمَتِكَ فِي عِبَادِكَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٦٢﴾﴾

﴿At length, when they came to a (lowly) valley of ants, one of the ants said: “O you ants, get into your habitations, lest Solomon and his hosts crush you (under foot) without knowing it.” So he smiled, amused at her speech, and said: “O My Lord! So order me that I may be grateful for Your Favours, which You have bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I may work the righteousness that will please You, and admit me, by Your Grace, to the ranks of Your righteous Servants.”﴾ (An-Naml:18-19)

Isn’t that a good example of positive thinking? An ant saved other ants from being crushed by Sulayman ﷺ and his army. When Sulayman ﷺ heard its warning, he praised Allah ﷻ for endowing him with the ability to understand the language of ants. Imagine we possess this positive thinking today. Certainly, we will change a great deal of things in our Muslim nation.

One believer can support Islam and the Muslims

When the Prophet ﷺ drew up the map for *Badr Battle*, he said: “We shall be positioned here. We shall fight here. We shall do such and such thing.” Al-Habbab Ibn Al-Mundir asked: “O Messenger of Allah! Is it a position dictated by Allah ﷻ or is it war, opinion and tactics?”

Observe the positive thinking in his question. He kindly and cleverly asked the Prophet ﷺ so that his tone does not hurt the Prophet ﷺ.

The Prophet ﷺ replied: "Indeed, it is war, opinion and tactics." Al-Habbab added: "So, let's move on, for this is not the right position. Let us move on until we near the water source (i.e. the nearest wells to the polytheists), and seal off the parts behind the wells. Afterwards, we build a pond of water, then start fighting the enemy. We will have a chance to drink but they won't (because the pond of water now surrounds the Muslims)." "That is a valid motion. Let's implement it."

Of course, so long as he did it with wisdom and tact without debasing the Prophet ﷺ, who is better than him. It is pure positive thinking.

When Nu'aym Ibn Masud embraced Islam during the days of *Al-Ahzab Battle*, he informed the Prophet ﷺ who welcomed him in, and ordered him to use his tricks to set up a trap between the Christians and Jews. Nu'aym did, and the result was the Muslims' victory.

Observe how the entire nation can succeed just by one single person. What are you waiting for?

A mosque on a university campus is a cultural approach

This is the story of a young man which took place a long time ago. During a time when people hid to perform acts of worship, especially praying, this young man asked students in his university for a place to pray, and they started making fun of him, saying, 'Do you pray while you are still young? Praying is for the elderly only, people with one's foot in the grave.' He was shown a disused basement. As he walked down, he found an old man praying. He asked him, 'Why are you praying here?' 'So that nobody sees me.' The young man objected, grabbed the old man by his hand and went up, insisting, 'We will pray in the open.' When they finished praying, the young man went to the university yard, outside the classes and prayed two *Rak'at*. He was jeered at by other students. On the second day, he prayed with the old man, and the third, a whole line of students joined in. As the lines increased, they decided to build a mosque. They did, and it was not just in that university, but other universities followed suit, believing that a mosque in the university is a sophisticated form of heritage for the performance of rituals.

Ponder the positive thinking of this young man which urged him to build a mosque, a sacred place for praying until the Day of Judgment. Ponder his reward which keeps multiplying every time a person joins in and prays.

What about our positive thinking vis-à-vis our religion? Are we going to stay cross-handed or move forward to serve this religion? This is what we hope to do: to serve this religion

in order to overtake the West and restore our dignity and honour.

Trust in Allah ﷻ

Endless Trust, Sincere Trust

We have made so many supplications to Allah ﷻ, everyday and every night, but are we sincere in our supplications? This is the most pressing question we should ask ourselves now. We must have unlimited trust in Allah ﷻ, a sincere trust which we should not link to the results. Put differently, we should have utter trust in Allah's ﷻ Bounty, without the slightest doubt in His Capabilities and Might. What does this mean?

Trust and sincerity bear no relation to results. For instance, we trust Allah ﷻ because He is the All-Capable. The whole universe is at His Disposal; He can manage it as He pleases:

﴿وَلَمَّا رَأَى الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْأَحْزَابَ قَالُوا هَذَا مَا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ،

وَصَدَقَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ ۖ﴾

﴿When the believers saw the Confederate forces, they said: "This is what Allah and His Messenger had promised us, and Allah and His Messenger told us what was true."﴾ (Al- Ahzab:22)

Man is bound by changes and life circumstances in general. But as for the believer, the more crises and hardships, the more his trust in Allah ﷻ grows and the firmer it gets. He would say: *Labbayaka wa Sa'dayk walkhayru kulluhu biyadik wa sharru laysa ilayka* (Here I am at Your service, O Allah, the good is all in Your Hands and evil cannot be attributed to You.)

Is still our trust linked to results? Will our trust in Allah ﷻ change if the results change?

Brothers and sisters! There is something wrong with our trust in Allah ﷻ, and we must strive to correct it.

O Fire! Be Cool and Safety...

Allah ﷻ has set up fixed laws in the universe such as fire, the sun, and so on and so forth. Allah ﷻ can do what He pleases, to a point of pulling out rescue from ruin. For example, the polytheists threw Ibrahim ﷺ into the fire, with the intention to burn him:

﴿قَالُوا حَرِّقُوهُ وَانصُرُوا آلِهَتَكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ﴾

«They said, "Burn him and protect your gods, if you do (anything at all)!"» (Al-Anbiya':68)

But Allah ﷻ reversed their wishes and commanded the fire to change into coolness and safety:

﴿قُلْنَا يَتَنَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ﴾ وَأَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا

فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ آلَٰءَ خَسِرِينَ ﴿٦٩﴾

«We said, "O Fire! Be you cool, and (a means of) safety for Ibrahim!" Then they sought a stratagem against him, but we made them the ones that lost most!» (Al-Anbiya':69-70)

One might wonder why Allah ﷻ did not rescue him before being thrown into fire. If Allah ﷻ did so, we would not recognize Allah's ﷻ Might. Who can talk to fire and alter its original function, except Allah ﷻ?

Another instance of Allah's ﷻ Might can be tangibly felt in 'pulling out' prophethood from the heart of disbelief. Think about where Mosses ﷺ was raised?

﴿فَالْتَقَطَهُ ءَالُ فِرْعَوْنَ لِيَكُونَ لَهُمْ عَدُوًّا وَحَزَنًا ۖ إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَمَانَ وَجُنُودَهُمَا كَانُوا خَاطِئِينَ﴾

﴿فَالْتَقَطَهُ ءَالُ فِرْعَوْنَ لِيَكُونَ لَهُمْ عَدُوًّا وَحَزَنًا ۖ إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَمَانَ وَجُنُودَهُمَا كَانُوا خَاطِئِينَ﴾

«Then the people of Pharaoh picked him up (from the river): (it was intended) that (Moses) should be to them

an adversary and a cause of sorrow, for Pharaoh and Haman and (all) their hosts were men of sin.) (Al-Kasas:8)

Even splendidly, Allah ﷻ gushed water out from rocks:

﴿وَإِذِ اسْتَسْقَىٰ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ ۖ فَانْفَجَرَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ مَّشْرِبَهُمْ ۖ﴾

«And remember Moses prayed for water for his people; we said: "Strike the rock with your staff." then gushed forth therefrom twelve springs. Each group knew its own place for water.» (Al-Baqara:60)

Try to ingrain trust deeply!

Brothers and sisters! Why don't we deeply ingrain trust in ourselves and our children in a way that it cannot be shaken or moved by adversities?

Note how the Prophet ﷺ would ingrain trust in children. The Prophet ﷺ advised Ibn Abbas ؓ: "Young man, I shall teach you some of words [of advice]: Be mindful of Allah ﷻ, and Allah ﷻ will protect you. Be mindful of Allah ﷻ, and you will find Him in front of you. If you ask, ask of Allah ﷻ, If you seek help, seek help of Allah ﷻ. Know that if the nation

were to gather together to benefit you with anything, it would benefit you only with something that Allah ﷻ had already prescribed for you, and that if they gather together to harm you with anything, they would harm you only with something Allah ﷻ had already prescribed for you. The pens have been lifted and the pages have dried." (Tirmidhi:2516)

Another example of this alteration of the laws of the universe is bringing the dead back to life. For instance, a man was killed amongst the Children of Israel, but no one knew who the killer was. Then, Allah ﷻ asked them to slay a cow, take one of its legs and use it to hit the dead. When they did, the man was brought back to life, informed them who his killer was, then died a second time. Who can boast this challenging act except Allah ﷻ.

﴿وَإِذْ قَتَلْتُمْ نَفْسًا فَادَرَأْتُمُ فِيهَا ۚ وَاللَّهُ مَخْرُجٌ مَّا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ ۚ﴾

فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبُوهُ بِبَعْضِهَا ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ يُحْيِي اللَّهُ الْمَوْتَىٰ وَيُرِيكُمْ ءَايَاتِهِ ۚ

لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾

«Remember you slew a man and fell into a dispute among yourselves as to the crime, but Allah ﷻ was to bring forth what you did hide. So we said: "Strike the (body) with a piece of the (heifer)." Thus Allah brings the

dead to life and shows you His Signs: Perchance you may understand.) (Al Baqarah:72-73)

Victory Comes To Us Unexpectedly

Be confident that Allah ﷻ will make us victorious, even at the hands of our enemy. Do you know how the people of Madina embraced Islam? They did at the hands of the Jews. How did this happen? The Jews prepared the people of Madina for the coming of the Prophet ﷺ by informing the two clans (Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj) of the following: 'A prophet will eventually appear. We will follow him, fight and kill you.' By doing this, they cast the phrase '...will come ...will come' in the hearts of people. So much so that when the Prophet ﷺ did appear and was an Arab, the Jews, to their surprise, refused to embrace Islam because they strongly believed that he should be from their own race. Too late, the atmosphere in Madina was very warm and welcoming, ironically prepared by the Jews. So, it was the enemies of Allah ﷻ who were unintentionally behind the spread of this religion in Madina.

Signs of Allah's ﷻ Magnificence and Might
Ponder the following verses:

﴿وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبَحْرِ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنَ وَرَقَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٌ فِي ظُلْمَتِ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٌ وَلَا يَابِسٌ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ﴾

«With Him are the keys of the unseen, none knows them but He. He knows what is in land and sea; not a leaf falls, but He knows it. Not a grain in the earth's shadows, not a thing, fresh or withered, but it is in a Book manifest.» (Al-An'am:59)

How magnificent the Might of Allah ﷻ is! That there is nothing that takes place but that He knows it.

The soul returns to Allah ﷻ every night:

﴿اللَّهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْأَنفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا وَالَّتِي لَمْ تَمُتْ فِي مَنَامِهَا فِيمِمْسَلِهَا
الَّتِي قَضَىٰ عَلَيْهَا الْمَوْتَ وَيُرْسِلُ الْأُخْرَىٰ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۚ إِنَّ فِي
ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾﴾

«It is Allah that takes the souls (of men) at death; and those that die not (He takes) during their sleep, those on whom He has passed the decree of death, He keeps back

(from returning to life), but the rest He Sends (to their bodies) for a term appointed. Verily, in this are Signs for those who reflect.) (Az-Zumar:42)

Another sign is the rolling up of heavens like a scroll:

﴿يَوْمَ نَطْوِي السَّمَاءَ﴾

﴿The Day that we roll up the heavens like a scroll rolled up for Books (completed).﴾ (Al Anbiyya':104)

Is our trust in Allah ﷻ still weak after all those signs?

﴿وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ وَالْأَرْضُ جَمِيعًا قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ﴾

﴿No just estimate have they made of Allah, such as is due to him. On the Day of Judgment, the whole of the earth will be but His handful!﴾ (Az-Zumar:67)

Do you sense Allah's ﷻ Dominion?

﴿قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَلِكُ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ﴾

﴿قَدِيرٌ﴾

﴿Say: "O Allah. Lord of power (and Rule), You give power to whom You please, and You strip off power from whom You please. You endue with honour whom You please, and You bring low whom You please. In Your Hand is all good. Verily, over all things You have power.﴾ (Al-Imran:26)

Brothers and sisters! We are Allah's ﷻ Dominion? Just ask yourselves the questions: Who owns the universe? Who owns the Earth? Who owns the galaxies? If you lay your entire trust in Allah ﷻ on this basis, then such trust in Allah's ﷻ Magnificence and Might will never wane.

Notice what the Prophet ﷺ said to Abu Bakr ؓ when they were in the cave, and Abu Bakr ؓ was scared to death. Abu Bakr Seddiq ؓ was quoted as saying: "When we were in the cave, I said to the Prophet ﷺ, 'If any of their chasers looked down at their shoes, they would see us!' The Prophet ﷺ assuredly asked Abu Bakr ؓ, 'O Abu Bakr! What do you think of two people and Allah ﷻ is their

third?" (Muslim:6119 and Tirmidhi:3069). Would it be wiser that Allah ﷻ was their third companion and would let them down? Of course not.

The Prophet ﷺ knew Allah's ﷻ Capabilities and was certain Allah ﷻ would save him. Brothers and sisters! Do not let your trust in Allah ﷻ wane, for it is the backbone of the nation's success.

A Ship in the Desert

Here is another example of Mosses ﷺ which illustrates his trust in Allah ﷻ.

As Mosses ﷺ and the Children of Israel were fleeing from the Pharaoh and faced the dangerous waters of the sea, Mosses's ﷺ companions desperately said, "We can't make it, we can't make it," Mosses ﷺ assured them by saying:

﴿كَلَّا إِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ﴾

«By no means! My Lord is with me! Soon will He guide me!» (Ashu'ara:63)

Imagine he was certain Allah ﷻ would rescue him. This is utter trust in Allah ﷻ.

When it was time for Nuh ﷺ and his followers to leave, Allah ﷻ ordered him to construct an Ark in the desert:

﴿وَأَصْنَعِ الْفُلَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحِّينَا وَلَا تَخْطُبْنِي فِي الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا إِنَّهُمْ مُغْرَقُونَ﴾

«But construct an Ark under Our eyes and Our inspiration, and address me no (further) on behalf of those who are in sin, for they are about to be overwhelmed (in the Flood).» (Hud:37)

Just imagine how much time that would take. First, Nuh ﷺ had to plant trees, wait for them to grow, cut them, then start making the Ark. In short, this would take some years to accomplish. More to the point, what would be the use of an Ark in the middle of a vast desert?

Allah ﷻ asked him to do such an onerous job to test his trust in Allah's ﷻ Capabilities. Would your trust in Allah ﷻ weaken if you were in Nuh's ﷺ shoes? I am sure that you will scoff at the idea: "An Ark in the desert! Is this what is going to save us?"

Our 'Ark' today is:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ﴾

«Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves.» (Ar-Ra'd:11)

Do not say 'there is no hope!' The desert in Nuh's ﷺ lifetime is the desert of our status quo, and his followers had trust in Allah ﷻ. In fact, they constructed the Ark and used it in the desert.

Brothers and sisters! Have trust in Allah ﷻ for He is the All-Capable:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ﴾

«Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves.» (Ar-Ra'd:11)

Seriousness

Changing the Self

The Prophet ﷺ said: "Guarantee me six things in you and I shall guarantee you Paradise." Surely, we will find that half of them consist of morals and the other half of acts of worship:

Honour your promise.

Tell the truth.

Pay back trusts.



Morals

Stay chaste.

Lower your gaze.

Imam Ahmad (5/323)



Worships (Al-Musnad,

Stay in touch with your kin.

It is all a matter of changing the self. It is said that what is pressing now is changing ourselves, for if we manage to

subdue and conquer the soul, other hurdles will seem easier. But, if we don't then other obstacles will be difficult to surmount.

Strategy for Change

First and foremost, we must be serious in order to achieve change. My address here is to our youth who should take matters seriously.

The Youth is the Nation's Priceless Asset

One might wonder why all the fingers of blame are now being pointed to the youth. This is because young people represent 70% of the Middle East population, whereas in the West only 30%. Do you know what this means? It means that our nation will reinvigorate in the next century because we possess a strong youth force. However, there is a fear that the 30% of the Western youth might become effective and serious, and then overtake us. Building a nation requires young force. Childhood is energy, but with no brains. Old age is wisdom, but no energy. Who has both? Youth has both energy and wisdom. What does a nation which does not have a certain amount of oil nor tourist industry possess? The best asset it has is its young people!!

A Nation is Measured by its Youth

When sociologists speculate when and how a nation will collapse, their speculations aren't based on astrological

evidence. On the contrary, they are based on certain criteria against which they measure the rise and fall of nations. One of the criteria is seriousness; it is the phrase in the Qur'an:

﴿حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ﴾

«until they change it themselves.» (Ar-Ra'd:11)

Do you know how sociologists carry out their research before issuing their results? They go to universities and cultural institutions and conduct surveys on the youth's interests, tendencies, goals and aspirations in life. Afterwards, they compile reports which highlight that say a nation will last for 100 years. They usually draw such conclusion when they find out that the interest of such nation's youth is very narrow. For instance, the majority of respondents to a survey say that their interest is to have a girlfriend. Unless people change themselves, a nation will never rise.

What sociologists are doing now is not new, for their research methodology dates back 1400 years ago. Andalusia remained under the Muslims' control for 800 years, and when the Portuguese decided to topple the Muslims, they studied the situation very carefully. The first thing to do was to send spies from Portugal to Spain to mingle with young people and try to know their interests. It was a sociological

study (study of a section of the population). Isn't it what the present time sociologists are doing now?

Are you satisfied now that you are the target? Remember, this is serious talk and seriousness is what is required of you now.

At first, it was difficult for the Portuguese to invade because young people were bright and energetic, and their interests far exceeded what the enemy had warranted. For instance, when the spies mingled with young people, they found out that the latter's interest ranged between excellence and competitions in chemistry, memorization of Al-Bukhari's Hadiths to horseracing. As a result, the spies would disappointingly return and inform the invaders to wait. The spies would go a second time and a third time until they found out once that the youth's interests were moving towards the ridiculous. They saw once a young man in tears. When they asked him what the matter was, he replied, "My girlfriend jilted me." At this point, the spies gave the go-ahead to the invaders to invade.

It is a shame, we colonized Andalusia for 800 years; it took the invaders two or three months to overthrow us. Do you know why? It was because of the youth's narrow interests.

Brothers and sisters! I am not undermining the spirit of our young people. On the contrary, I am boosting it because I believe that it has the potentials to rise. However, there is a

large percentage of our youth which suffer from a lack of seriousness and should be reminded of such danger.

What are the signs of lack of seriousness?

A young person who has been lazy throughout the year, then cheats in the exams at the end of the year is not serious. You may argue that half of the graduates are without jobs, but how will this nation triumph whilst those party to this decline are teachers who turn a blind eye on cheating? By doing this, you are producing a youth that does not have a sense of seriousness. How will this nation triumph whilst parents and guardians prepare crib notes for their children? How will this nation go forward whilst the first step we take is cheating?

Lack of seriousness is also manifest in a young girl's interest. For instance, a young girl spends hours in front of the mirror, fixing her hair and putting make-up. She dresses in tight outfit to attract and tempt young males. In parallel, a young boy spends hours in the gym trying to shape up his body not to fight alongside the martyrs but to flirt and attract girls.

We are planting the seeds of our own destruction. We don't just mention these examples to ridicule our youth; it is a serious matter, for we are talking about a nation on the verge of collapse: We are abandoning our Muslim way of life and adopting the Western way of life. Simply put, is it right to

import its 'worst product' and leave out its 'best product' (i.e. seriousness)?

Another example of the lack of seriousness is parties where both men and women dance to a song or move their bodies from right to left. Omar ؓ once passed by a young person swinging from right to left, then said to him: "Are you crazy?" The man replied, 'No, O Prince of Believers.' Omar ؓ warned him, "We don't tolerate such walk."

And the list of examples goes on. It is true to say that they are shocking examples, but it is our sad and pitiful reality. However, it is not the reality of all our youth. In fact, there is a revival (*sahwa*) amongst some youth, but others need guidance and ushering.

Brothers and sisters! Our Islam is Great and Beautiful! There is nothing wrong with it; there is something wrong with us!

Look how the West is advancing! Look how Germany was rebuilt after the War. Who rebuilt it? Look how Japan was rebuilt. Who rebuilt it after a devastating war? Look how Lebanon was rebuilt after the war. Who rebuilt it?

Margaret Thatcher, the former British Premier, regardless of the war with Argentina, wore dark ordinary clothes for four years. Can you imagine her seriousness in dealing with matters?

Let us Follow in the Footsteps of the Companions and Prophet's ﷺ Seriousness

We do not have to go all the way to the West and learn, for we have the best examples from the best people. Notice the Prophet's ﷺ seriousness. At the outset of his invitation of people to Islam, the Prophet ﷺ said: "By Allah, O uncle! If the sun was placed on my right and the moon on my left in order to abandon this religion, I will not, until Allah ﷻ makes it prevail or I shall die without it." (*At-Tabari: 1/545 and Seera Nabawiyya: 2/101*)

Allah ﷻ says to Yahya ؑ who was very young at the time:

﴿يَحْيَىٰ خُذِ الْكِتَابَ بِقُوَّةٍ ۚ وَءَاتَيْنَاهُ الْحِكْمَ صَبِيًّا﴾

«O Yahya! Take hold of the Book with might. And we gave him wisdom even as a youth.» (*Maryam:12*)

Ibrahim ؑ was approximately 16 when he set out for his mission:

﴿سَمِعْنَا فَتَىٰ يَذْكُرُهُمْ يُقَالُ لَهُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ﴾

«They said, "We heard a youth talk of them. He is called Ibrahim."» (*Al-Anbiyaa:60*)

The Cavemen were 16 or 17 years old when they were going through hardships:

﴿إِنَّهُمْ فِتْيَةٌ ءَامَنُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ وَزِدْنَاهُمْ هُدًى﴾

«They were youths who believed in their Lord, and we advanced them in guidance.» (Al-Kahf:13)

These are all examples of youths, men under 20 years of age. So, seriousness begins at an early age.

Forty Years Are Enough to Change a Generation

﴿خُذِ الْكِتَابَ بِقُوَّةٍ﴾

«Take hold of the Book with might.», a recurrent phrase in the Qur'an, tells you to be serious. The Children of Israel were not serious in their response to Moses's ﷺ invitation to enter the Sacred Land:

﴿قَالُوا يَمْوَسَىٰ إِنَّا لَن نَّدْخُلَهَا أَبَدًا مَا دَامُوا فِيهَا ۖ فَاذْهَبْ أَنتَ

وَرَبُّكَ فَقَاتِلَا إِنَّا هَاهُنَا قَاعِدُونَ﴾

«They said, 'O Mosses! We will never enter it as long as they are there. So, go you and your Lord and fight, for we shall remain here sitting down.» (Al Ma'ida:24)

Allah's ﷻ Response was:

﴿قَالَ فَإِنَّهَا مُحَرَّمَةٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً﴾

«He said, 'It is now unlawful for you for forty years'.» (Al-Ma'ida:26)

The verse implies that they were prevented from entering Palestine and Al-Quds for forty years. Why such a restraining order was issued? Because it is enough as a period to change an entire generation, and because the generation of that period was not serious, whether with Allah ﷻ or with themselves.

At Uhud Battle, the Prophet ﷺ called for people's assistance, saying: "Who wants to sacrifice their self?" Five youths from Al-Ansar volunteered to defend the Prophet ﷺ, and four of them were killed in action. The one who remained alive was Yazid Ibn As-Sakn ﷺ who showed great resistance. He was only stopped by the wounds and stabs in his body. He finally fell dead on the ground with his face on soil."

Look at the Prophet's ﷺ reaction! When the Prophet ﷺ saw Yazid in this state, he said, 'Lift his face up off the soil.' The Prophet ﷺ then kneeled down, rubbed the soil off Yazid's face, laid it on his lap and said, 'O Lord! I attest that Yazid Ibn As-Sakan has honoured his promise. I attest that I

am pleased with Yazid Ibn As-Sakan.” (Al-Bauhaqi, *Dalail An-Nubuwwa*, 3/235)

Among the Believers are Men Who Have Been True to Their Covenant with Allah ﷺ

Abu Bakr ﷺ said: “By Allah! I haven’t slept so that I can dream (i.e. he had no time for sleep), nor stayed up late to be negligent, nor have I been led astray.”

Anas Ibn An-Nadar ﷺ missed *Badr Battle* as he was away. When he came back, he said to the Prophet ﷺ: “It is really a shame I missed the first battle fought against the polytheists. However, If I am given a chance to fight the polytheists, I will show you.” When *Uhud Battle* drew to a close and the Muslims suffered heavy losses, Anas ﷺ apologized to the Prophet ﷺ for the Muslims’ stupid act, and headed with his sword towards the polytheists of Quraysh. He passed by Saad Ibn Mu’az ﷺ and said to him, ‘I can smell the breeze of Paradise.’ Later Saad ﷺ said, ‘I will never be able to do what he did.’ Later, Anas ﷺ was found dead with about eighty stab wounds. In fact, we did not recognize him at first because of the heavy wounds. It was his sister who recognized him by his index finger. At this point, Allah ﷻ revealed:

﴿مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّن قَضَىٰ نَحْبَهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّن يَنتَظِرُ وَمَا بَدَّلُوا تَبْدِيلًا﴾

«Among the believers are men who have been true to their Covenant with Allah. Of them some have completed their vow (to the extreme), and some (still) wait, but they have never changed (their determination) in the least:» (Al-Ahzab:23)

Anas ﷺ was the best example of a believer who was true to his Covenant with Allah ﷻ.

Abu Ayyub al-Ansari ﷺ was eighty when he took part in the conquest of Constantinople. He would beg them to let him fight, and they would say, ‘you can’t. You can’t even hold your spear properly.’ Notice the seriousness! He would respond by saying: “Does not Allah ﷻ say:

﴿أَنْفِرُوا خِفَافًا وَثِقَالًا﴾

«Go forth light and heavy.»? (At-Tawba:41)

Muhammad Al-Fatih was 23 years old when he conquered Constantinople.

Salahuddin did not smile for a very long time. When asked why, he replied, “How can I smile while *al-Quds* is prisoner.

I really feel embarrassed to smile before Allah ﷻ while my brothers are being tortured."

Does anyone of you have this seriousness? It is only through seriousness that change will come.

Brotherhood and Good-Heartedness

What's in Your Heart?

Is it right to find someone who holds grudges against an entire people? Is it right to find a people that holds grudges against another, whilst all these people belong to one nation 'the nation of Muhammad ﷺ'?

It is unconceivable to see the hearts filled up with grudges against one another instead of being filled up with mercy and kindness towards one another. However, it is the bitter reality and it is happening in our nation.

In order to change, we must cleanse our hearts of these grudges and strive to taste the sweetness of brotherhood.

What is Allah's ﷻ Mercy?

Let's examine the issue of brotherhood throughout history by starting with the story of Moses ﷺ and the Pharaohs. Recall when Allah ﷻ commanded Moses ﷺ to go to Pharaoh,

﴿أَذْهَبْ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَىٰ﴾

﴿“Go you to Pharaoh, for he has indeed transgressed all bounds.”﴾ (Ta-Ha:24),

Moses ﷺ responded by asking Allah ﷻ:

﴿رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي ۖ وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي ۚ﴾ وَأَحْلِلْ غَدَاةً مِّنْ
إِنْسَانِي ﴿٢٧﴾ يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي﴾

﴿“O My Lord! Expand my breast; “Ease my task for me; “And remove the impediment from my speech, so they may understand what I say.﴾ (Ta-Ha:25-28)

What else did he ask for? He asked for brotherhood because he could not do without a brother in his mission:

﴿وَأَجْعَلْ لِّي وَزِيرًا مِّنْ أَهْلِي ۚ﴾ هَارُونَ أَخِي ﴿٢٨﴾ أَشَدُّ بِمَنِيَّ أَرْزِي
﴿٢٩﴾ وَأَشْرِكُهُ فِي أَمْرِي ﴿٣٠﴾ كَيْ نُسَبِّحَكَ كَثِيرًا ﴿٣١﴾ وَنَذْكُرَكَ كَثِيرًا
﴿٣٢﴾ إِنَّكَ كُنْتَ بِنَا بَصِيرًا﴾

﴿“And give me a minister from my family, Harun, my brother; add to my strength through him, and make him share my task, that we may celebrate Your Praise without stint, and remember You without stint, for You are He that (ever) regards us.”﴾ (Ta-Ha:29-35)

We might ask Moses ﷺ the following question: Why you Moses! Can't you praise and remember Allah ﷻ by yourself? No, it would be better and easier if I am accompanied by my brother! Brotherhood is priceless, and Allah ﷻ did not hesitate for a moment to grant him his request:

﴿قَدْ أُوتِيتَ سُؤْلَكَ يَا مُوسَىٰ﴾

﴿Granted is your prayer, O Moses!﴾ (Ta-Ha:36)

In fact, it was part of Allah's ﷻ Mercy:

﴿وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ مِنْ رَّحْمَتِنَا أَخَاهُ هَارُونَ نَبِيًّا﴾

﴿And, out of Our Mercy, we gave him his brother Harun, (also) a prophet.﴾ (Maryam:53)

Simply, preserve your brotherhood and you will earn Allah's Mercy.

When Moses received the call from his Lord to spend forty days in the mountains, away from the Children of Israel, the latter reverted to worshipping the calf. Moses was succeeded by his brother Harun who had two options in dealing with the Children of Israel.

Yet, the two options posed a thorny dilemma:

To coercively bring them back to the right path by abandoning the calf. Yet, this would trigger a division. One group would follow Harun, the other would persist in worshipping the calf, and fighting would break between the two;

To wait patiently for Moses's return because the latter had authority.

Harun eventually decided to wait his brother to return and thus maintained peace and stability.

Upon his return and to his surprise, Moses found his people worshipping the calf. He was so furious that he grabbed his brother by the head and beard:

﴿قَالَ يَهُودُ مَا مَنَعَكَ إِذْ رَأَيْتَهُمْ ضَلُّوا ۖ أَفَلَا تَتَّبِعُ أَفْعَصَيْتَ أَمْرِي ۚ﴾ قَالَ يَبْنَؤُمْ لَا تَأْخُذْ بِلِحْيَتِي وَلَا بِرَأْسِي إِنِّي خَشِيتُ أَنْ تَقُولَ فَرَّقْتَ بَيْنَ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ وَلَمْ تَرْقُبْ قَوْلِي﴾

«(Moses) said: "O Harun! What kept you back, when you saw them going wrong? Did you then disobey my order?" (Harun) replied: "O son of my mother, seize (me) not by my beard nor by (the hair of) my head! Truly I feared lest you should say, "You have caused a division among the Children of Israel, and you did not respect my word!"» (Ta-Ha:92-94)

What Harun did was part of his individual judgment which Moses accepted. The conclusion to draw from this story is that the Children of Israel were behind the first quarrel between two brothers.

Rule and Divide!

Our beloved Prophet Muhammad taught us how essential brotherhood is for Muslims and for Islam to flourish. In the midst of oppression and persecution in Makka, Prophet Muhammad started to preach Islam to other tribes and

cities hoping that he could find a place that is more secure than Makka to move to. He never thought of going to Yathrib though (Medina afterwards) because there was an ongoing war between two tribes there, Aws and Khazraj. Do you know why there was a war? Let me tell you. The Jews moved to Yathrib because their sacred scripts told them that the last Prophet will appear soon and he will migrate to this city, so they decided to move and settle there to wait for his appearance. Seeing that there are two big tribes in Yathrib they feared that they would drive them out, so they decided to keep them busy fighting one another. Also another reason to start a war between Aws and Khazraj was to profit from selling weapons to them. So the Jews divided themselves into two groups, each group allied with one tribe, either Aws or Khazraj. Part of the alliance agreement was that if a Jew allied with Aws is killed then the whole tribe must participate in punishing the attacking tribe. So, the Jews would plot fake clashes between themselves where a Jew allied with Aws would "kill" a Jew allied with Khazraj thereby sparking a war between the two tribes. As a result, the tribal war in Medina was at its peak and the Jews were fueling it more and more, and therefore Prophet Muhammad ﷺ never even considered it as a place to immigrate to.

Hope Looms in the Horizon

Then one day Prophet Muhammad ﷺ met 6 youth from the Khazraj tribe in Makka and they all accepted Islam and went

back to Yathrib. The next year they were 12 Muslims, 9 from Khazraj and 3 from Aws. When Prophet Muhammad ﷺ saw that, he became very happy because he felt that Islam was bringing back the brotherhood between these two tribes.

O Lord! Do not Leave Any Rancour in Our Breasts

Another year passed and Prophet Muhammad ﷺ migrated to Yathrib and announced the ending of the ongoing war between Aws and Khazraj, and the relationship between them became one of brotherhood and mutual respect and love. The Jews failed ever since to restart any war between them: the brotherhood was far too strong. The Jews tried to revive the old grudges but were unable to do so. Rancour now was superseded by unshaken brotherhood. When the Prophet ﷺ heard of the Jews' renewed attempt, he loudly said: "Keep away from the rot." (Muslim:6526, Tirmidi:3315)

What is this Rot? It is the Trials of Division!

The new phase in relationship was strengthened by a string of revelations encouraging brotherhood:

﴿وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا ۚ وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِيَعْمَةٍ إِخْوَانًا ۚ وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِّنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُم مِّنْهَا ۚ﴾

«Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: They are the ones to attain felicity.» (Al-Imran:103)

﴿وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِمْ مِّنْ غِلٍّ إِخْوَانًا عَلَىٰ سُرُرٍ مُّتَقَابِلِينَ﴾

«And we shall remove from their hearts any lurking sense of injury: (they will be) brothers (joyfully) facing each other on thrones (of dignity).» (Al-Hijr:47)

The third verse was revealed to further strengthen this brotherhood:

﴿إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ﴾

«The believers are but a single brotherhood, so make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending)

brothers; and fear Allah, that you may receive mercy.) (Al-Hujurat:10)

The Prophet ﷺ followed these verses with a number of sayings to further consolidate this spirit of brotherhood, among which are:

«A believer for another believer is like a building whose different parts enforce each other.» The Prophet ﷺ then clasped his hands with the fingers interlaced.» (Al-Bukhari:6026 and Muslim:6528)

«The similitude of believers in regard to mutual love, affection, fellow-feeling is that of one body; when any limb of it aches, the whole body aches, because of sleeplessness and fever.» (Al-Bukhari:6011 and Muslim:6529)

Another verse was revealed to describe this special relationship between the believers in Yathrib:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ جَاءُوا مِن بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا

الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًّا لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا رَبَّنَا

إِنَّكَ رءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٩٧﴾﴾

«And those who came after them say: "Our Lord! Forgive us, and our brethren who came before us into the Faith, and leave not, in our hearts, rancour (or sense of injury) against those who have believed. Our Lord! You are indeed full of kindness, Most Merciful.» (AL-Hachr:10)

Brothers and sisters! Use the part «and leave not, in our hearts, rancour (or sense of injury) against those who have believed.» in your Du'a. Imagine you have rancor against one million Muslims. It is only through getting rid of your grudges against your Muslim brothers that change will take place.

Prophets and Martyrs Envy Them!

The Prophet ﷺ said: "Around the Throne, there are pulpits of light on which there are people dressed in shining clothes and their faces are shining. They are neither prophets nor martyrs, but prophets and martyrs wished to take their position. The companions wondered who they might be, so he said that they are people who loved each other in Allah ﷻ. When they meet, they obey Him and when they leave each other, they obey Him."

"Allah ﷻ will say on the Day of Judgment: "Where are the ones who love one another for My Sake? Today, I shall shade them with My Shade on this day when there is no shade except Mine." (Hadith Qudsi, Muslim: 6494)

Perhaps these words will be the cause of our new start with no grudges against our brothers and live as one nation.

Imagine You Earn Allah's ﷻ Love While Sitting Down!

"Allah ﷻ says: "My love to those who love one another for My Cause, for those who strive in My Cause (spend their wealth for My Cause), and for those who support one another for My Cause, and for those sitting together over My Sake."

Notice the last part of the Hadith. You earn Allah's ﷻ Love simply —while sitting down— by saying to yourself, 'I will harbor in my heart love for every member of Muhammad's ﷺ Umma.'

What a magnificent religion! Who says after all that that this religion fosters violence and hatred, and so on and so forth...?

Do you notice how Islam has raised the minds and hearts, and ornamented it with the noblest tributes!

Repent For All Your Sins

Love and brotherhood for Allah's ﷻ Sake not only allow you to earn reward in the Hereafter, but are also the cause of

strengthening one's Faith (*Iman*). The Prophet ﷺ said: "The most dependable handhold on faith is: love for the sake of Allah and hatred for the sake of Allah." (Imam Ahmad, *Musnad*:4/287)

Loving and hating for Allah's ﷻ Sake is likened to the firm tying in a knot. Simply put, your love for the believers should be strong and so should your hate for the hypocrites and infidel. The Prophet ﷺ said: "There are no two Muslims who meet and greet each other but that Allah ﷻ forgive their sins before they part." (Abu Daud: 5212 and Tirmidi: 2727)

Brothers and sisters! The doors of good are numerous in our religion. Your sins are forgiven by simply shaking hands with your Muslim brother!

Have Half of My Wealth

Love and brotherhood between *Al-Ansar* and *Al-Muhajirun* in Yathrib reached its pinnacle. We must never forget Saad Ibn Ar-Rabi' *Al-Ansari* and Abdurrahman Ibn 'Awf. Anas ؓ was quoted as saying: "Abdur-Rahman Ibn Awf came (from Makka to Medina) and the Prophet ﷺ made a bond of brotherhood between him and Saad Ibn Ar-Rabi' *Al-Ansari*. *Al-Ansari* had two wives, so he suggested that Abdur-Rahman take half, his wives and property. Abdur-Rahman

replied, "May Allah ﷻ bless you with your wives and property."¹

Do you know the difference between our and their generation? They would hear a verse and acquiescently act accordingly:

﴿إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ﴾

(The believers are but a single Brotherhood.) (*Al-Hujurat*:10)

Here Is More of a Brother to Me Than You!

According to Ibn Hashim, Abu Aziz was one of the generals in the polytheists' army at *Badr Battle* who succeeded Abu An-Nadr Ibn al-Harith. When his brother Mus'ab Ibn 'Umayr ؓ said what he had to say to the person (Abu al-Yusr) holding him hostage, Abu Aziz said, 'O brother! Is that what you advise the man to do?' Mus'ab ؓ replied, 'The man is more of a brother to me than you.'²

Mus'ab's ؓ remark, "He is more of a brother to me than you" is the truth because brotherhood as a result of faith comes before biological one, and the religious relationship

¹ Transmitted by Al-Bukhari (7/317), *The Virtues of Al-Ansar*.

² Ibn Hisham, *As-Seera* (3/54)

comes before kinship. Allah ﷻ said to Nuh ﷺ concerning Nuh's ﷺ son who was a disbeliever:

﴿قَالَ يَنْحُوحُ إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنْ أَهْلِكَ إِنَّهُ عَمَلٌ غَيْرُ صَالِحٍ﴾

﴿O Noah! He is not of your family, for His conduct is unrighteous.﴾ (Hud:46)

Brotherhood... Even in the Grave!

Uhud was a blemish in the heroic history of Muslim battles against the infidel. The believers disobeyed the Prophet ﷺ, and the losses were so heavy for anyone to bear. 70 men were martyred, including Hamza ﷺ, the Prophet's ﷺ uncle and brother from suckling, and their bodies were savagely mutilated. The Prophet ﷺ, already 57, had some of his teeth broken, forehead gashed, and lip cut. Everyone was sad, tired, wounded or injured, and wanted to go home. However and amidst all these sordid circumstances, the Muslims were still digging graves and interring the seventy bodies of their Muslim brothers. As they were doing so, the Prophet ﷺ loudly shouted, "Stop the burial." "Why?" They astonishingly asked. "We are tired; we want to go home." The Prophet ﷺ added: "Put Abdullah Ibn Amr Ibn Haram ﷺ and Amr Ibn Al-Jamuh ﷺ in one grave; they were loving and sincere to each other in this world." The two loving friends, the two martyrs, were buried in one grave under the

battlefield that received their pure souls and witnessed their extraordinary bravery." (Ibn Saad, *At-Tabaqat al-Kubra*, 3/106)

The Prophet ﷺ knew that those who were loving towards each other in this life should not be separated even in their grave.

The Morals of Islam

There is the pressing question, surrounding this brotherhood. Does it mean that the companions never argued or had conflict? I may argue, disagree and even quarrel with you, but there is something that should not change in me towards you. It is this kindness towards you and it is this ardent hope in me to never harbor any rancour against you. In the context of the companions, Abu Darr Al-Ghifari ﷺ once had an argument with Bilal ﷺ and branded him as "The son of the black woman." In response, Bilal ﷺ was so sad and complained to the Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ summoned Abu Darr ﷺ and told him off: "You insulted his mother, didn't you? You are a person who still has traces of the Pre-Islamic era of ignorance." (Muslim:4289)

Indeed! It is a pre-Islamic sign. We are worse. Our everyday life is full of insults that send shivers down the spine.

To err is human, but what is important is to realize your mistake and take back what you have said or done to your Muslim brother. In fact, Abu Dharr ؓ realized how grave his mistake was, and sought apology by laying his cheek on soil and asking Bilal ؓ: "Please, stamp with your foot on my cheek till my heart is clear."

Let's take a leaf out of these people's books!

Praise to Allah ﷻ! They are brothers!

Malik ad-Dar reported: "Omar ؓ gave once 400 dinars to a boy to take to Abu Ubayda ؓ and tell him to spend them for himself. He also asked him to wait and see how he would spend them. Abu Ubayda ؓ divided the money and asked a servant to distribute it...until it was all gone. The boy went back and informed Omar ؓ, who gave the boy the same amount of money and asked him to take it to Mu'az Ibn Jabal ؓ and wait to see how he would spend it. Ibn Jabal ؓ acted in the same way, and as he was dividing and distributing the money, his wife said, 'What about us, we are poor.' There were only two dinars left which he threw to

her. The boy went back and explained to Omar ؓ what had happened, and Omar ؓ smiled and said, 'They are brothers, indeed.'...¹

You Are Dear to Me!

The death of Omar ؓ triggered a great trial for the Muslim nation. However, it may be a blessing in disguise, a lesson to us to know how to deal with adversities. Look at the Muslims' hearts amidst the chaos, temptations and hardships. When the two armies, one led by Ali ؓ, the other by Az-Zubayr Ibn Al-Awwam ؓ, were preparing to start the clash, Ali ؓ went to Az-Zubayr ؓ and reminded him: "Do you recall when the Prophet ﷺ asked you if you loved me and you replied in the positive?" Az-Zubayr ؓ replied: "Oh! That's right. I forgot about it. By Allah ﷻ! I will not fight you, brother." Az-Zubayr ؓ decided to abandon the battle.

However, the Jews killed him to keep the flame of *fitna* on between the Muslims. This is a similar case to that of *al-Aws* and *al-Khazraj*. Who killed Az-Zubayr ؓ? It was said, 'The Prophet's ﷺ followers, thus rekindling the *fitna* and breaking out war...

¹ *Sifat as-Safwa* (1/491), *Hilyat al-Awliya'* (1/237) and *Siyar A'laam an-Nubala'* (1/457)

Ali ﷺ said concerning Talha's ﷺ killing: "Inform Talha's ﷺ killer that he will abide in Hellfire."¹

Talha Ibn Mutraf was quoted as saying: "When Ali ﷺ reached Talha ﷺ, he found him already dead. He dismounted his beast and wiped dust off his face and beard, praying for him and saying: 'I wish I were dead twenty years before.'"²

Abu Habiba (Talha's ﷺ servant) was quoted as saying: "Imran Ibn Talha and I went to see Ali ﷺ after the Battle of the Ditch. He welcomed Talha ﷺ and said to him, 'I wish Allah ﷻ would count us, me and your father among those about whom He ﷻ says:

﴿وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِمْ مِّنْ غِلٍّ إِخْوَانًا عَلَىٰ سُرُرٍ مُّقْنِبِينَ﴾

(And we shall remove from their hearts any lurking sense of injury: (They will be) brothers (joyfully) facing each other on thrones (of dignity).) (al-Hijr:47)"³

Outstanding Brotherhood

Ali's ﷺ men asked him about the army they were fighting, saying: "Are they disbelievers?" "No, they aren't." "Are

¹ Imam Dahbi, *Siyar A'lam An-Nubala'* (1/36-37)

² According to al-Haythami in *Majma'* (9/150), tradition transmitted by at-Tabarani, with a good chain of narration.

³ Ibn Sa'd (3/1/160), at-Tabari (14/36) and Ibn Kathir (4/164).

they hypocrites?" "No, they aren't." "What are they then?" "They are our brothers who had ill-treated us."

Do you see how strong brotherhood was, for they refused to brand them as the enemy, hypocrites or disbelievers!

Brother! You are the Goodness of This Life and the Hereafter

If you really know the goodness that brotherhood brings to you in this life and the Hereafter, you will not hesitate for a moment to bridge the gap with every Muslim on this earth. Observe the following Hadiths:

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"Whoever relieves a believer in distress in this world, Allah ﷻ will relieve him of some of the distress of the Day of Resurrection. Whoever makes things easy for those who are in difficulty, Allah ﷻ will make things easy for him in this world and in the next. Whoever conceals the faults of a Muslim in this world, Allah ﷻ will conceal his faults in this world and in the Hereafter. Allah ﷻ will help a servant (of His) so long as the servant helps his brother." (At-Tirmidhi:1425)

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"It is not permissible for a man to forsake his Muslim brother for more than three days, each of them turning away from the other when they meet. The better of them is the one who gives the greeting of salaam first." (Al-Bukhari: 6077 and Muslim: 6478).

"The gates of Paradise are not opened but on two days, Monday and Thursday; then every servant (of Allah ﷻ) is granted pardon who does not associate anything with Allah ﷻ except the person in whose (heart) there is rancour against his brother. And it will be said thrice, 'Look towards against them until there is reconciliation'" (Muslim: 6490).

May Allah support the believers who keep the bond of brotherhood in faith and help one another in obeying Almighty Allah ﷻ.

What is the State of Your Heart at the End of the Day?

According to Muslim scholars, brotherhood in Islam dictates purity of hearts and love towards one another (for Allah's ﷻ sake). You should persist in carrying in your heart all love for your brothers, and cleansing your heart of every jealousy and betrayal towards any Muslim.

You probably know about the story of the man about whom the Prophet ﷺ said: "A man from the people of Paradise will come in now." Anas ﷺ reported: "We were sitting with the Prophet ﷺ when he said, 'man from the people of Paradise will come in now.' A man from the Ansar walked in, with water dripping from his beard as a result of ablution, carrying his shoes in his left hand. On the following day, the Prophet ﷺ said the same thing, and the same thing happened again (the man walking in) On the third day, the Prophet ﷺ said the same thing, and the same thing happened again (the man walking in, etc...) When the Prophet ﷺ left, Abdullah Ibn Amru ﷺ followed the man and said: 'I had an argument with my father, and I have vowed not to go back home for three days. I am wondering if you can put me in for three days.' The man agreed.' Abdullah said to us, 'I spent three nights at his, and I never saw him do Qiyyam. All he did was invoking Allah ﷻ when he changed his position in bed or cover himself up with the blanket, until he got up for the *fajr* prayer. However, all that he said was good. Three nights have elapsed now, and I could have underestimated his actions. On the last night, I told him, 'O Abdullah! I fabricated the whole thing, for I didn't have any argument with my father. My intention was to sit with you and watch your actions at home. The Prophet ﷺ told us thrice that whenever you walked in the mosque that you are from the People of Paradise. So I really wanted to see what is that you do that made you a man from Paradise. I haven't

seen you doing anything extraordinary. So, what is it that made the Prophet ﷺ say such thing about you?' The man replied, 'What you've seen is exactly what I do.' The man leaving, he called me and added, 'add to that the fact that I do not hold any grudge against any Muslim.' 'This is it, this is what makes you from the People of Paradise, and this something not easily attainable.'"¹

Let us Forgive Each Other!

It is high time you sat with you brothers and wiped the slate clean. It is high time you cleansed your heart from any grudges you hold against your brothers. A man once said to Ibn Sammak, "Let us accuse each other tomorrow." Sammak replied, "But say, instead, let's forgive each other."

One of the Prophet's ﷺ companions gave the following advice: "When your brother is wrong, try to find seventy excuses for him. If you do not find one, say, 'I am the wrong one.'"

¹ Ahmad and an-Nasai. According to Ibn Kathir in his *Tafsir* (4/338). This hadith has an authentic chain of narration which fulfils the norms of transmission set by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

Hold Your Brother's Hand and Enter Paradise

The Prophet ﷺ: "On the Day of Judgment, two servants will stand trial before Allah ﷻ. One of them will say, 'O Lord! Take my right from my brother.' Allah ﷻ will say, 'Give your brother his right.' The wrongdoer will say, 'I have no good deeds left.' Allah ﷻ will say: "You have used up your brothers' good deeds." The wronged will say, 'Take from my misdeeds and add them to his (the wrongdoer).' Allah ﷻ will say to the wronged, 'Raise your head and see.' The wronged will look up and see a magnificent palace. He will say, 'Who is it for? Is it for a messenger or a martyr?' 'It is for you,' the Lord will say. 'Why do I deserve it for?' 'Because you have forgiven your brother.' 'O Lord! I have forgiven him, I have forgiven him!' Allah ﷻ will say, 'hold your brother's hand and enter Paradise.'" (*Al-Hakim:4/576*)

What a Mercy bestowed by Allah ﷻ and what an exemplary bond of brotherhood!

The Prophet ﷺ said: "Whosoever defended the honour of his brother, Allah ﷻ will protect his face from fire on the Day of Judgment." (*Tirmidi:1931*) The Hadith implies that a person who does not like his brother Muslim being disparaged and thus defends him even in his absence, Allah ﷻ will protect this person from Hellfire.

What a magnificent religion! It is a system that protects societies from all types of evil and promotes happiness, security and love.

Change yourself now by removing any grudges against your Muslim brothers from your heart right now.

It is only then, only when Allah ﷻ inspects our hearts and finds out that there are no grudges that He ﷻ will give us victory. Holding grudges weakens the edifice of society:

﴿وَلَا تَنَزَعُوا فَتَفْشَلُوا وَتَذْهَبَ رِشْكُكُمْ﴾

«And fall into no disputes, lest you lose heart and your power depart.» (Al-Anfaal:46)

Allah ﷻ looked inside the hearts of Badr fighters and found their hearts like one, and so He ﷻ assured them: "Do as you please, for I have forgiven your sins."

Let's act as one heart, as one nation and as one spirit, haply Allah ﷻ will revive our dignity.

Doing Good (Al-Ifsan)

The West (ironically) Surpassed us in This Noble Character

Doing good has slipped from our hands, and only few people possess it. Ironically, only irreligious people seem to excel in it.

Remember that the law of change does not concern only Muslims. On the contrary, it applies to everyone in this world, for Allah ﷻ does not say in the verse 'Allah will never change the condition of a Muslim.' He ﷻ says 'people'. So, what is required of us so that change is possible? What are the characteristics that we must possess and those we must give up in order to change our conditions?

Doing Good Means Doing Something Skillfully

Doing things with skill is at the heart of Islamic teachings. We lack this skill in every act we do. Change is not a button that you press and get it. Rather, it is an arduous process.

Therefore, we may argue that change is a difficult task, but it is not impossible. This is evidenced by the fact that our nation transformed from centuries of shepherding to preaching then to leading the world within a period of just 23 years.

Our Nation is Deteriorating Day After Day

All our actions remain, unfortunately, theoretical. We perform but unskillfully. Examples of this are numerous, to mention but few: student's revision is inadequate, the teacher's performance is poor, and the worker's productivity is insufficient. Some would even name this inadequate performance as intelligence. Skilful performance is part of our Muslim tradition. The Prophet ﷺ said: "Allah ﷻ likes to see things done skillfully." (At-Tabarani, *Al-Mu'jam al-Awsat*, Hadith No.901)

Don't you want to be loved by Allah ﷻ? Perform with skill and Allah ﷻ will love you.

The West adopted this strategy and succeeded in their mission. They have moved forward and become sovereign, because sovereignty is linked to laws and systems.

In contrast, our nation is deteriorating day after day: unemployment is soaring because of a lack of skill in performance.

A Huge Chasm Between us and the West

According to study conducted in Arab states on the amount of working hours, the findings reveal that an Arab employee works an average of 12 to 13 minutes per day; whereas, in the West the average is between 8 to 10 hours. Isn't that appalling?

Examples of Doing Good from the Qur'an

Allah ﷻ says:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَنِ وَإِيتَايَ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ٩٠﴾

«Allah commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion. He instructs you, that you may receive admonition.» (*An-Nahl*:90)

In the above verse, Allah ﷻ places kindness in the second place to justice, which means it is very important.

﴿الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكُظُمِ الْغَيْظِ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ﴾ (30)

«...who expend in prosperity and adversity in almsgiving, and restrain their rage, and pardon in offences of their fellowmen, and Allah loves the good-doers.» (Ali-Imran: 134)

Doing good includes morals, worship and deeds.

﴿إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ﴾

«Allah's ﷻ Mercy is within the reach of those who do good.» (Al-A'raaf:56)

Imagine you become Allah's ﷻ beloved simply by doing kind.

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ﴾

«Allah leaves not to waste the wage of the good-doers.» (At-Tawba:120)

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ إِنَّا لَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ مَنْ أَحْسَنَ عَمَلًا﴾

«As to those who believe and work righteousness, verily we shall not suffer to perish the reward of any who do a (single) righteous deed.» (Al-Kahf: 30)

﴿إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ﴾

«Allah's Mercy is near to those who do good.» (Al-A'raaf:56)

The efforts of those who do good will not go down the drain. In fact, Allah ﷻ will reward those who do good and give them extra rewards:

﴿لِّلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا الْحُسْنَىٰ وَزِيَادَةٌ﴾

«To those who do right is a goodly (reward), and more (than in measure).» (Yunus:26)

Extra rewards implies looking at Allah's ﷻ Face.

What a reward to see Allah ﷻ! Imagine seeing the Creator of the Universe! Imagine seeing the Lord of the Universe!

In the above verse, Allah ﷻ places kindness in the second place to justice, which means it is very important.

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Extra rewards implies looking at Allah's ﷻ Face.

What a reward to see Allah ﷻ! Imagine seeing the Creator of the Universe! Imagine seeing the Lord of the Universe!

Dear reader, try to do good in everything so that you may earn this rank.

A student may wonder: "I want to revise, so I can pass the exam." This is a positive attitude and is linked to seriousness which marks each one of us. However, to cheat in an exam is neither part of seriousness nor skill. Earning a degree with distinction is not as important as the ambition of the entire nation to develop on the basis of your success and skill in doing things.

We Have Lost Trust in Our Products!

It goes without saying that when we go to supermarkets, we tend to choose foreign brands without reading the label or even asking for the price, because we have lost trust in our local products. Our local products lack quality. They are either expired, unfinished or made of cheap material. Therefore, we must change ourselves and perfect our work.

Success is Part of Worship

I was shocked by what a young man said to me. He said that while the West excel in technology, we waste our time worshipping Allah ﷻ. "Do you really think like that?" I asked. "Yes." "In fact, part of our worship is excellence. We must excel in every undertaking and set an example for the rest of the world:

«كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ»

(You are the best nation ever brought to men...) (Al-Imran:110)"

Why Don't You Try?

The Prophet ﷺ commands us to do good in everything (Abu Daud:2815 and Tirmidi:1409)

Ask yourself the following question. "Do I do everything properly from the moment I open my eyes in the morning?" Try to imagine everything you do: your teaching, your greeting to your mother in the morning, your work at the company, and so on and so forth. Try to ask yourself these questions everyday and you will see the result.

Treat Animals Kindly

The Prophet ﷺ sets a good example of kindness to animals when he said: "If you have to kill an animal, do it properly, and if you slaughter a beast, sharpen your knife and relieve your beast of the pain." (Muslim: 5028)

What a religion! The Prophet ﷺ teaches even how to be kind to an animal destined to be killed or slaughtered for our food..

Worship Allah ﷻ as Though He is Visible

﴿الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ، وَبَدَأَ خَلْقَ الْإِنْسَانِ مِنْ طِينٍ﴾

«He who has made everything which He has created best. He began the creation of man with (nothing more than) clay.» (As-Sajda:7)

﴿وَأَحْسَنَ كَمَا أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ﴾

«But do you good, as Allah has been good to you.» (Al-Qasas: 77)

When Gabriel ﷺ visited the Prophet ﷺ, among the religious issues he asked the Prophet ﷺ was the meaning of *Ihsan*? The Prophet ﷺ replied, “*Ihsan* means worshipping Allah ﷻ as though visible, for if you cannot see him, He ﷻ sees you.” (Al-Bukhari:50, Muslim:97)

Learn the Techniques of Debate

Allah ﷻ even taught us how to argue:

﴿وَجِدِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ﴾

«And argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious.» (An-Nahl:125)

Even in arguing, one party should be kind to the other. Abu al-Walid ﷺ once had a heated argument with the Prophet ﷺ and started shouting. The Prophet ﷺ kept calm until Abu al-Walid finished, and said to him, “Have you finished Abu al-Walid?” “Yes.” “Can I talk now?” the Prophet ﷺ said.” (As-Suyuti, *Ad-Dar al-Manthur* (5/358))

What a comprehensive religion! It even teaches us how to argue!

Arm Yourself with Kindness all the Time

When dealing with one's parents: The word *parents* and kindness often co-occur:

﴿وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا﴾

«And that you be kind to parents.» (Al-Israa:23)

Upon greeting:

﴿وَإِذَا حُيِّتُمْ بِتَحِيَّةٍ فَحَيُّوا بِأَحْسَنَ مِنْهَا﴾

«And when you are greeted with a greeting, greet with a fairer than it..» (An-Nisaa: 86)

In Divorce:

«الطَّلَقُ مَرَّتَانٍ فَإِمْسَاكَ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ تَسْرِيحٌ بِإِحْسَانٍ»

«A divorce is only permissible twice. After that, the parties should either hold together on equitable terms, or separate with kindness.» (Al-Baqara:229)

Whoever behaves in a good way during divorce will surely do the same for the rest of his life.

Release me and I will Interpret your Dream

Yusuf عليه السلام was wrongly accused and then imprisoned for a crime he did not commit (fornication with Al-Aziz's wife). While in prison, he once interpreted one of his inmates' vision (the King's butler) and the vision was fulfilled. His inmate was released and worked as a butler for the king. As the days went by, the king had a dream in which he saw seven lean cows eating seven fat ones, and sought interpretation. When his counsels were unable to interpret it, the butler informed them that there was one prisoner by the name of Yusuf who interpreted dreams. When approached

to interpret the king's vision, Yusuf عليه السلام gave them the solution in the interpretation unconditionally; that is, before being released from prison:

«تَرَزَّعُونَ سَبْعَ سِنِينَ دَابًّا فَمَا حَصَدْتُمْ فَذَرُوهُ فِي سُنْبُلِهِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِمَّا تَأْكُلُونَ»

(Yusuf عليه السلام) said: "For seven years shall you diligently sow as is your wont, and the harvests that you reap, you shall leave them in the ear, except a little, of which you shall eat." (Yusuf:47)

Would you act in the same way or would you say to them: "Release me first and I will interpret your dream?"

I am inclined to believe that you would opt for the second option. Do you know what pushed Yusuf عليه السلام to behave in such a way? It is *Ihsan*. It was the best opportunity for him to take revenge in retaliation for the wrong imprisonment. He could have denied his knowledge of the interpretation of dreams and plunged the community in hardship and adversity. But he did not do it because, simply, it is not part of the noble character of Muslims. Furthermore, the story does not inform us of whether the polytheists embraced Islam or not, because *Ihsan* is not linked to results. Put differently, Yusuf عليه السلام showed the polytheists how and when

to plough, store food, and so on and so forth without inquiring about their creed.

What a magnificent religion! We should be proud of our religion and of being Muslims!

Ihsan is one of the characters of perfection which we all should strive for.

The Dignity of Muslims

Allah ﷻ Wants Us to be Dignified...

One of the most pressing issues today is the dignity of Muslims. Where is it?

Unlike a disrespectful person, a Muslim is naturally dear to Allah ﷻ. His self, religion, Qur'an and nation are dear to him, and his dignity is always intact.

This is what Allah ﷻ wants for us to be. But, why did we throw this dignity and are sowing the seeds of our own disgrace?

Why Do We Instill Humility with Our Own Hands?

Humility begins with mundane matters. For instance, a teacher would punish a student by making him stand and face the wall for a while in front of his classmates. This student will never be dignified and will never forget the day when he is humiliated. A wife who has been battered, debased and humiliated before her children, will never feel dignified. The Prophet ﷺ forbids us to hit someone in the face because it is humiliation. He ﷺ never hit his wives,

servants or anybody for the sake of dignity. A young person who is shot down whenever he wants to speak loses confidence and feels very low and grows up to be pessimistic.

Never Relinquish Your Right!

One day, the Prophet ﷺ was in a gathering which included senior citizens. Ibn Abbas ؓ, who was a wise young man, was sitting on his right side. Usually, the Prophet ﷺ would start with whosoever was on his right side when distributing water. However, this time he asked Ibn Abbas ؓ if he could let him start with the others, but he refused, saying: "I will never relinquish my right for the sake of another." (Al-Bukhari:5620 and Muslim:5260)

What a stance! This is how dignity is preserved!

Do you know what was the Prophet's ﷺ reaction? "Do as you please, Abbas."

Never Allow Yourself to be Humiliated!

Some employees are humiliated but feel unable to protest. When they are asked why they have to put up with it, they say: "I cannot leave my job because it is a source of income for me."

Brothers and sisters! It is better to live hungry and dignified than comfortable and undignified.

What is the solution? Go and look for another job where dignity is preserved. You cannot raise a strong family while you yourself are undignified. By turning on a blind eye and keeping silent about your tarnished dignity, you are harming yourself and your family.

Allah ﷻ is Our Sole Source of Dignity

Imagine that a foreign expert or engineer is respected simply because he is foreign, but your fellow expert and engineer is humiliated because he is an Arab. Why? Even worse, a plane may be late for an hour or so, and a cabin crew member would only apologise to the foreigners and not the Arabs aboard.

An Arab person inherently does not tolerate humiliation (*al-Madalla*). And the word *madalla* carries a negative connotation for the Arabs. For example, in the Qur'an it refers to animals and how Allah ﷻ subjected them to man for use:

﴿أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا خَلَقْنَا لَهُمْ مِمَّا عَمِلَتْ أَيْدِينَا أَنْعَمًا فَهُمْ لَهَا مَلَائِكُونَ
وَذَلَّلْنَاهَا لَهُمْ فَمِنْهَا رَكُوبُهُمْ وَمِنْهَا يَأْكُلُونَ﴾

«See they not that it is we who have created for them among the things which Our hands have fashioned cattle, which are under their dominion? And that we have subjected them to their (use)? Of them some do carry them and some they eat.» (Yasin:71-72)

The Prophet ﷺ asked Aisha: "Do you know why they have raised the gate of Kaaba?" "No." "They have done it out of dignity so that only those who are permitted to enter it will enter it." (Muslim:3233)

Brothers and sisters! Dignity starts with the individual before extending to the nation.

The only source of dignity for us is Allah ﷻ:

﴿مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعِزَّةَ فَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ جَمِيعًا﴾

«If any do seek for glory and power, to Allah belong all glory and power.» (Fatir:10)

You Are Nobody's Servant! You Are the Servant of Allah ﷻ!

Man does not possess dignity or indignity, for it is Allah ﷻ Who makes one dignified and undignified. Man's circumstances may change on the spur of the moment. For instance, a once-dignified man may turn undignified today. A rich person may become poor and a living person may become dead. Therefore, we belong to Allah ﷻ and we are His Servants. From this perspective, we may ask the question: Shall the poor seek the rich or the poor's assistance? Of course, the poor should seek the rich's assistance to change his situation. By the same token, we are the poor and Allah ﷻ is the Rich and; therefore, we need His Help. We are the humiliated and Allah ﷻ is the Glorious and; therefore, we need Him to live with dignity. Allah ﷻ says:

﴿قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَلِكُ الْمَلِكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِإِذْنِكَ الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ﴾

«Say: "O Allah, Lord of power (and Rule), You give power to whom You please, and You strip off power

from whom You please. You endue with honour whom You please, and You bring low whom You please. In Your Hand is all good. Verily, over all things You have power".) (Al-Imran:26)

Never seek honour from other than Allah ﷻ, for He is the Only One Who possesses it. Allah ﷻ says:

﴿أَيَنْتَفُونَ عِنْدَهُمُ الْعِزَّةَ﴾

«Do they seek glory in them?» (An-Nisa:139)

They are wrong because

﴿فِلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ جَمِيعًا﴾

«But glory altogether belongs to Allah.» (Fatir:10)

﴿وَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَكِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

«But honour belongs to Allah and His Messenger, and to the believers, but the hypocrites know not.» (Al-Munafiqun:8)

Allah ﷻ, however, accepts the Muslim's humility to His Servants only when such humility is shown toward the parents:

﴿وَآخِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا﴾

«And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say: "My Lord! Bestow on them Your Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood."» (Al-Isra:24)

and toward the believers:

﴿فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ أَذِلَّةٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَعِزَّةٍ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ﴾

«Allah will assuredly bring a people He loves, and so love Him, humble towards the believers, disdainful towards the unbelievers.» (Al-Maida:54)

When Does One Become Humble?

One feels humble when he is wronged, that is why Allah ﷻ addresses him, vowing: "Allah ﷻ never let down the supplication of the wronged even if he is a disbeliever." (Muslim:121)

This type of humbleness is the result of external factors and may; therefore, be overcome. However, the worst type and self-humiliation and may be divided into four:

First: Surrender to the Satan

Iblis said to Allah ﷻ:

﴿أَرَبُّنَاكَ هَذَا الَّذِي كَرَّمْتَ عَلَيَّ لَئِنْ أَخَّرْتَنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ لَأُخَفِّنَنَّ ذُرِّيَّتَهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا﴾

«He said: "See You? This is the one whom You have honoured above me! If You will but respite me to the Day of Judgment, I will surely bring his descendants under my sway, all but a few!"» (Al-Israa:62)

The word *لَا أُخَفِّنَنَّ* (la ahtanikanna) in the above verse means *bridling* (e.g. a beast). This is exactly what Iblis wants to do to us. Of course, he does not literally do it in this way, but he does it by inciting us to commit sins.

Second: Following One's Desires

Following one's desires in everything leads one to his downfall. The Prophet ﷺ: "Wretched is he who runs after money." (Ibn Majja: 4135-4136)

Allah ﷻ says:

﴿أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ﴾

«(Then see you such a one as takes as his god his own vain desire?)» (Al-Jaatiya:23)

Ibn Taymiyya defines the prisoner as the one who deprives his heart of knowing Allah ﷻ, and defines the hostage as the one who is held hostage by his own desires.

Some would argue that this is how they want their life to be, but Allah ﷻ says:

﴿كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ﴾

«You are the best nation ever brought to men...» (Al-Imran:110)

How?

By:

﴿يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ﴾
(enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong.) (Al-Imran:110)

Third: Becoming Oblivious to the Existence of Allah ﷻ Religion, the Right Path and the Umma

We have a magnificent model to follow, but we do not value it. In fact, we only value what we lack. We feel that we belong to another culture or another country. For instance, some young people would put foreign flags around their necks or would stick foreign labels on the back of their jackets or pants.

Fourth: Losing one's Trust in Allah ﷻ

For example, people start to forget that everything has been preordained by Allah ﷻ. In fact, some even feel that provision (*ar-rizq*) may come from other than Allah ﷻ. This is absolutely wrong because the Prophet ﷺ said: "Gabriel ﷺ uttered to my heart that no soul shall ever die unless it finishes its provision and completes its duration." (Ibn Abdelbarr, *at-Tamhid* 1/284)

So, when does one become humiliated? One becomes humiliated when he gives in to Satan, when he is conquered by his desires and when he loses trust in Allah ﷻ. When all this happens to you, you become exactly like the Muslims who were humiliated by their enemy one hundred years ago.

During the days of Tatars, a tatar woman addressed 10 Muslim men, saying: "I don't have a sword to kill you with. Face the wall while I go and get a sword to kill you." The men were frightened to do anything. She came back with a sword and slit their throats. This is how the Muslim situation was during the Tatars conquest of Baghdad, and this is our reality. However, Allah ﷻ revived and reinvigorated us with Islam.

We Were Humiliated But Allah ﷻ Made us Dignified with Islam!

Take, for instance, Omar Ibn al-Khattab ؓ. One the day he embraced Islam, he went to the Prophet ﷺ and asked: "O Allah's Messenger! Don't we follow the truth?" "Yes, we do" "Don't they follow falsehood?" "Yes, they do." "So, why secrecy?" The Prophet ﷺ said, "What are you waiting for Omar?" Omar ؓ said: "Let's openly declare our religion." Hence, the Prophet ﷺ gave him the name: *Al-Faruq* (the divider) i.e. between truth and falsehood.

Tariq Ibn Shihab reported: "When Omar ؓ came to Sham (Syria), there was a puddle on his way. So, he dismounted his beast, took off his footwear, and crossed it with his feet. Abu Ubayda ؓ told him, 'You have done something great today in the eyes of people. You have done something great thing!!' Omar ؓ struck his chest and said, 'Why can't someone else say it, Ubayda ؓ? You were the most undignified and humiliated people, and you were the smallest in number, then Allah ﷻ elevated you through Islam. So, whenever you seek dignity through other means than Islam, Allah ﷻ will humiliate you...'"¹

"Do you want religion to diminish while I am still alive?" (Abu Bakr's ؓ stance during the wars of apostasy (*hurub ar-rida*)).

Imam Dhahbi said: "When the death of the Prophet ﷺ became known across the neighbouring cities, many Arab communities turned non-Muslim (apostatized) and abstained from paying *Zakaat*. In response, Abu Bakr ؓ began his fighting campaign, but Omar ؓ and others disagreed with him and advised him to stop the fighting. Abu Bakr ؓ replied, 'By Allah! If they abstained from paying as little as a tax upon a female off-spring goat or (in another narration) rope which they used to do during the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ, I will fight them for their abstinence. *Zakaat* is a duty which they must comply with, and by Allah! I shall fight

¹ Al-Bidaya wa Nihaya (4/61)

whoever differentiates between *Zakaat* and *Salaat*." Omar ؓ commented, "By Allah! Once Allah ﷻ opens up Abu Bakr's ؓ heart to fighting, I knew then that it is the truth he is defending."¹ Omar ؓ used to say to Abu Bakr ؓ, "O Abu Bakr! Be kind to people." Abu Bakr's ؓ reply was: "I was hoping to get your support, but all I got from you was resistance. Is it a tyrant in the Pre-Islamic era of ignorance and then a coward in Islam? Divine revelation is over and the religion has been established, do you want it to diminish whilst I am alive? Didn't the Prophet say, 'Except if they observe them? Observing them here is *Salat* and *Zakaat*? By Allah! If all people violate these rights, I will fight them with my soul.'"²

What a Strong Woman!

Asma, Abu Bakr's ؓ daughter, was eighty when her son Abdullah Ibn Az-Zubayr was an ardent opponent of al-Hajjaj. He continued to fight al-Hajjaj and the latter killed him and tied his dead body to a wall in Makka. People waited eagerly for her reaction. Everyone was expecting that she would plead to al-Hajjaj to untie her with her son. To their surprise, she was so cool that al-Hajjaj got furious and

¹ Al-Bukhari (7284-7285), *The Book of I'tisam with Kitaab wa Sunna*, Chapter: Following the Messenger of Allah's Sunna ﷺ, Muslim (22), *The Book of Imaan*.

² At-Taarikh Al-Islami, Mahmud Shakir (3/68)

went to her. "Have you seen what I did to your son?" She wisely responded, "You have ruined his worldly life, but he has ruined your afterlife." *What a patience and what a woman!*

From the Injustice of Religions to the Justice of Islam...

Rub'iy Ibn Amir was sent as an ambassador to invite people to Islam. When the Persian king, Rostum, knew of his coming, he tried to ensnare him with women and gold. The aim was to send a message to Rub'iy in particular and to the Muslims in general that they were very rich. When he arrived there, he began destroying every object of attraction in his way until he reached Rostum. The latter asked, "What is the purpose of your visit?" Rub'iy replied, "Allah ﷻ has sent us to stop people from worshipping people and start worshipping Allah ﷻ, to move people from living within the narrow confines of the worldly life to the limitless space of the worldly life and the Hereafter, and to take them away from the injustice of the religions to the justice of Islam.

It was great dignity that rooted itself in the heart of this man when he realized that he was simply a servant of Allah ﷻ!

O Mu'tasimah (seeking the help of the Caliphate)!

When a woman was slapped by a Roman soldier in a market, she screamed 'O Mu'tasimah! O Mu'tasimah!' In response,

al-Mu'tasim (the Caliphate) sent a message to the Roman King stating, 'From al-Mu'tasim to the dog of Romans...Send the woman dignified or else I will send an army extending from this end to your end.'

What a great dignity! Can we behave in a similar way? How can Muslims regain their dignity?
There are certain examples to follow, but the first thing to do is to go back to Allah ﷻ who says:

﴿مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعِزَّةَ فَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ جَمِيعًا﴾

«If any do seek for glory and power, to Allah belong all glory and power.» (Faafir:10)

Secondly, we will retrieve our dignity when we realize that our way (Islam way) is the best and our nation is the best:

﴿وَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَكِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

«But honour belongs to Allah and His Messenger, and to the believers, but the hypocrites know not.» (Al-Munaafiqun:8)

﴿كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ﴾

(You are the best nation ever brought to men...) (Al-Imran:110)

Thirdly, we will regain our dignity when we realise our provision and lives are under Allah's ﷻ Control. Some people asked a woman to tell Omar ﷺ that her husband would not go to *Jihad* because he had dependants. Her response was: "I know for sure that my husband is a consumer but not a provider. So, if the consumer dies, the provider will not."

In conclusion, the Prophet ﷺ said: "Whosever humiliates and refuses to support a Muslim while capable of helping him, shall be humiliated by Allah ﷻ in front of people on the Day of Judgment." (Ahmad, *al-Musnad*)

Showing Repentance

Why and For What Do We Repent?

This is one of the most exhausted issues in Muslim tradition. However, our status-quo necessitates reminding the Muslims that showing sincere repentance to Allah ﷻ is the only way to lift our crisis. Many questions such as the current crisis the Muslim nation is undergoing, the wars, poverty and the like have been addressed and need answering.

A young man once said to me that perhaps the hardships we are enduring now are the result of his sins, because he knew what his sins were. This is far-fetched, for it may not be that he is the sole cause, but it is his sins, my sins and your sins which accumulate and act as an obstacle between Allah ﷻ and us. Therefore, we should immediately repent.

To Err is Human...

When Adam ﷺ disobeyed Allah ﷻ, he began running in Paradise. Allah ﷻ asked him, "Are you fleeing from me?"

"No, I am ashamed of what I have done," replied Adam ﷺ. Part of Allah's Tributes are mercy, pardon and generosity, and if Allah ﷻ has created us infallible, what would the worth of these Tributes be?

Imagine we pray and make the following *du'a* to Allah ﷻ tonight: "O Lord! We humbly ask Your Forgiveness." Don't you think that Allah ﷻ will accept our supplications? Of course, He ﷻ will, for He is the All-Merciful towards His Servants.

Everyone is fallible except the Prophet ﷺ. The only difference between us is that some would sin and repent, and others would persist in sinning.

Make Firm Resolutions!

Make firm resolutions to repent and never commit any sins from today. Make *du'a* to Allah ﷻ, saying humbly: "O Lord! I am showing my repentance to you for my sins. Accept my *du'a* and do not expel me from Your Mercy." Imagine each one of us does that, what will be the result? Of course, our situation will change for the better.

Beware Haughtiness and Persistence in Committing Sins!

Do not persist in committing sins. Rush now to repent and Allah ﷻ will surely accept your repentance:

﴿وَمَا ذَٰلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ بِعَزِيزٍ﴾

﴿Nor is that for Allah any great matter.﴾ (Ibrahim:20)

Perhaps Allah ﷻ will end our suffering and hardships through your repentance. Do not take pride in your worship and convince yourself that you have trivial and minor sins that haven't been recorded and that you won't be asked to account for. Be warned that nothing escapes the watchful eyes of Allah ﷻ:

﴿مَالٌ هَٰذَا إِلَّا كِتَابٌ لَا يُغَادِرُ صَغِيرَةً وَلَا كَبِيرَةً إِلَّا أَحْصَاهَا﴾

﴿What a Book is this? It leaves out nothing small or great, but takes account thereof.﴾ (Al-Kahf:49)

Furthermore, the sins that you think are minor or trivial may be counted serious by Allah ﷻ:

﴿وَحَسِبُونَهُ هَيِّنًا وَهُوَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمٌ﴾

﴿And you thought it to be a light matter, while it was most serious in the sight of Allah.﴾ (An-Nur:15)

It is high time we repented. Is not what is happening to the Muslim world today the result of neglecting our religion?

Do not Despair of Allah's ﷻ Mercy!

Truly, we should not. But we must admit that we have transgressed the borders. Allah ﷻ says:

﴿فَلْيَبْغِي دِيَّ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِنْ رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ﴾

«Say: "O My servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah, for Allah forgives all sins. He is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful." (Az-Zumar:53)

The reader may wonder if one person's repentance is sufficient to put the Muslim nation back to the right track. Yes, it is. And it is evidenced by what the Prophet ﷺ said: "The similitude of believers in regard to mutual love, affection, fellow-feeling is that of one body; when any limb of it aches, the whole body aches, because of sleeplessness and fever." (Al-Bukhari: 6011 and Muslim: 6529)

Sometimes people —because of the accumulation of sins— forget about Allah's ﷻ Mercy and His Love for those who show repentance. Observe the following verses:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ﴾

«...for Allah loves those who turn to Him constantly and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean.» (Al-Baqara:222)

﴿أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ﴾

«Do they not know that Allah accept His Servants' repentance?» (Al-Tawba:104)

﴿غَافِرِ الذَّنْبِ وَقَابِلِ التَّوْبِ﴾

«Who forgives sin and accepts repentance.» (Ghafir:3)

We now know what we want: to repent and wipe the slate clean. But have we asked ourselves what does Allah ﷻ want from us?

The answer is crystal clear:

﴿وَلَا يَرْجُوا أَن يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأُرِيدُ الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الشَّهَوَاتِ أَن يُبْرِئَ اللَّهُ أَن تَخَفَ عَنْكُمْ وَخُلِقَ الْإِنْسَانُ ضَعِيفًا﴾

«Allah does wish to turn to you, but the wish of those who follow their lusts is that you should turn away (from Him), far, far away. Allah does wish to lighten your (difficulties), and man was created weak (in flesh)» (An-Nisa:27-28)

Indeed! This is what Allah ﷻ wants for us: to repent. And since we are weak, we need to turn to Allah ﷻ to make us strong and restore our dignity.

Wrongdoers are those who refuse to repent...

Allah ﷻ says:

﴿وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَتُوبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ﴾

«And those who do not desist (from committing sins) are (indeed) doing wrong.» (Al-Hujurat:11)

There are two categories of sinners: Those who sin then repent, and those who sin and refuse to repent. The last category is the one implied in the above verse. Some people would boast their acts of worship and think that they do not need any repentance, oblivious to the importance of the verse which says:

﴿وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ﴾

«And O you believers! Turn you all together towards Allah that you may attain bliss.» (An-Nur:31)

Arguably, how can a believer repent since he is already a believer? This is proof enough that repentance is binding even upon the believer. In other words, Allah ﷻ wishes to show that no one is infallible.

The Prophet ﷺ was infallible, yet he would seek Allah's Forgiveness

The Prophet ﷺ said: "I am the most fearful of and knowledgeable of Allah ﷻ, yet I seek His Forgiveness more than seventy times a day." (Ibn Majah:3816). Other

traditions state "seeking forgiveness hundred times a day" (Ibn Majah:3815). If that was the case of the Prophet ﷺ who was infallible, what about us who are fallible? How many times a day are we required to seek Allah's ﷻ Forgiveness?

Allah's ﷻ Delight at our Repentance!

Do you know that Allah ﷻ is delighted to see his servant's repentance? The Prophet ﷺ cited the following illuminating example: "Allah ﷻ is more pleased with the repentance of a servant as he turns towards Him for repentance than that one amongst you who is upon the camel in a waterless desert and there is upon (that camel) his provision of food and drink also and it is lost by him, and he having lost all hope (to get that) lies down in the shadow and is disappointed about his camel and there he finds that camel standing before him. He takes hold of his nose string and then out of boundless joy says: 'O Allah! You are my servant and I am Your Lord.' He commits this mistake out of extreme delight." (Muslim: 6887) Notice that Allah ﷻ is "more" pleased than this ecstatic servant. Now, do we matter to Allah ﷻ? Does He care about us? You can draw your own conclusion. My feeling is that He does. A great deal!

In fact, Allah ﷻ opens up the doors of repentance every day and night: "Allah ﷻ extends His Hands in the night to

forgive the sinner of the day and extends His Hands in the day to forgive the sinner of the night." (Muslim: 6921) Despite all this, we still refuse to repent. Here is an inspiring story which may help you to turn to Allah ﷻ.

Allah's ﷻ Mercy

Once upon a time, there was a king who owned so many slaves, and each slave was assigned a specific task. One day, one of the king's enemies convinced one of the slaves that the king was a horrible person, whispering to him that he might seek happiness somewhere else. The slave left the palace but soon realized that the man was a liar. He decided to return to the palace but lost all hope of ever being reinstated. To his surprise, the king welcomed him back warmly. If this is mercy between man and man, what about the mercy between Allah ﷻ, the Merciful and His Servants? Isn't it high time we repented?

Perhaps the following example is more illuminating. Imagine a mother expels her son from home following an argument. Imagine her son wandering in the streets and ending up asleep at the doorstep of his home. Do you really think that she would let him sleep outside? On the contrary, she would open the door, hug him tightly, welcome him back, and forget all about it. By the same token, the door of repentance and mercy is open for us after we have sinned.

Once we knock on this door, Allah ﷻ will open it. The following *Qudsi Hadith* further expounds the point metaphorically: "Whoever draws near me by the span of a palm, I draw near him by a cubit. If he draws near me by a cubit, I draw near him by the space covered by two hands. If he walks toward me, I go to him running." (Imam Ahmad, *al-Musnad*:2/413)

The Individual's Influence upon the Group

It was narrated that in the days that Prophet Moses ﷺ wandered with **Bani Israel** (Children of Israel) in the desert, an intense drought befell them. Together, they raised their hands towards the heavens praying for the blessed rain to come. Then, to the astonishment of Prophet Moses ﷺ and all those watching, the few scattered clouds that were in the sky vanished, the heat poured down, and the drought intensified. It was revealed to Prophet Moses ﷺ that there was a sinner amongst the tribe of Bani Israel (Children of Israel) who had disobeyed Allah ﷻ for more than forty years of his life.

"Let him separate himself from the congregation," Allah ﷻ told Prophet Moses ﷺ. "Only then shall I shower you all with rain." Prophet Moses ﷺ then called out to the throngs of humanity, "There is a person amongst us who has disobeyed Allah ﷻ for forty years. Let him separate himself

from the congregation and only then shall we be rescued from the drought."

That man waited, looking left and right, hoping that someone else would step forward, but no one did. Sweat poured forth from his brow and he knew that he was the one. The man knew that if he stayed amongst the congregation all would die of thirst and that if he stepped forward he would be humiliated for all eternity. He raised his hands with a sincerity he had never known before, with humility he had never tasted, and as tears poured down on both cheeks he said, "O Allah, have mercy on me! O Allah, hide my sins! O Allah, forgive me!"

As Prophet Moses ﷺ and the people of Bani Israel (Children of Israel) waited for the sinner to step forward, the clouds hugged the sky and the rain poured. Prophet Moses ﷺ asked Allah ﷻ, "O Allah, you blessed us with rain even though the sinner did not come forward."

And Allah ﷻ replied, "O Moses, it is for the repentance of that very person that I blessed all of Bani Israel (Children of Israel) with **water**."

Prophet Moses ﷺ, wanting to know who this blessed man was, asked, "Show him to me O Allah!"

Allah ﷻ replied, "O Moses, I concealed his sins for forty years. Do you think that after his repentance I shall expose him?"

Ponder for a moment how one single man's sin could have ruined the entire community.

A countryman asked the Prophet ﷺ the following question: "I have committed a sin; will Allah ﷻ accept my repentance?" "Yes, He will". "Will He if I sin again?" "No, He will record it". "And if I repent?" "He will erase it". "And if I sin again?" "He will record it." "And if I repent?" "He will erase it". When will He stop erasing?" "Allah ﷻ tires of erasing only when a servant tires of asking forgiveness." (Az-Zubaydi, *Ithaf as-Sada al-Muttaqin*: 9/178)

The Requirements for Repentance

There are three requirements for repentance: regret for the sin, desistence from sin, and avowal not to sin again.

When Adam ﷺ was expelled from Paradise, Allah ﷻ addressed him, saying: "O Adam! You used to come to me in the fashion a king would visit a king, but now you visit Me as a servant visits a king, and I like it. O Adam! A sin that turns you humble towards me is better than an act of worship that makes you haughty. O Adam! For Me, the humility of the sinner is better than the arrogance of the obedient."

Allah's ﷻ Mercy is Comprehensive

The Prophet ﷺ said: "Whosoever performs ablution, then properly offers two *Rak'at* shall have his sins wiped out."

The Prophet ﷺ reported that Allah ﷻ says in the *Qudsi Hadith*: "O son of Adam, so long as you call upon Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done, and I shall not mind. O son of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. O son of Adam, were you to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth and were you then to face Me, ascribing no partner to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great at it." (Tirmidi:5340)

Another *Qudsi Hadith* says: "A servant commits a sin then says, 'O Lord! I have sinned, forgive me.' Allah ﷻ will respond, 'Since My servant knew that he has a Lord who forgives all sins, then I forgive My servant.'"

Dear reader, repent for all your sins, turn to Allah ﷻ humbly and humiliated, and He ﷻ shall forgive all your sins. But, never persist in sinning and refuse to repent.

The Story of Kaab Ibn Malik ﷺ

When the Prophet ﷺ decided to launch the *Tabuk* expedition, he asked all able bodied men to join him, except for those who have special circumstances that would prevent them from travelling and leaving their homes for a long time. Valid excuses would be an illness or elderly parents who need care. The companions rushed to obey the Messenger ﷺ and they prepared themselves for the long trip.

The *Tabuk* expedition occurred in a very inopportune time for most people. It was a very hot time of the year, and most people avoided long travels during this time. The distance from Madina to Tabuk was over 500 kilometers, a trip that would take many days by foot or on camels and horses. Also, it was the time of harvest for many owners of gardens around Madina. Travelling at this time would mean that they would not be able to harvest, and would incur large financial losses.

Yet, even with all of these difficulties, the vast majority of companions obeyed the Messenger ﷺ without question. They took their provisions, prepared their belongings and were ready to join the Messenger. Three of the companions, however, stayed behind. They were in good health, and had enough wealth and resources that they could have joined the expedition. But they did not. The Satan was able to overcome them. They disobeyed Allah ﷻ and the Messenger ﷺ and followed their own personal desires. Kaab Ibn Malik was one of the three.

He said that he was in his full health and strength at the time of this expedition. He was also financially able to go. However, he did not prepare when the others prepared, and he told himself that he would delay his travel and catch up with the expedition after a day or two. The days passed, and he kept delaying the travel, until it was too late for him to catch up. So he stayed behind, and he noticed that the only

men remaining in Madina were the hypocrites, the sick and the elderly, which greatly saddened him.

When he heard that the Messenger ﷺ arrived back in Madina, he went to the mosque to welcome him back. He initially thought of any excuse or lie to tell the Messenger ﷺ in order to avoid angering him. But then he remembered Allah ﷻ, and he knew that Allah ﷻ knows the truth that is in his heart. He realized that he should be honest, and that lying will not help him. In fact, it will only add more sins to the one he has already committed by not joining the Messenger ﷺ.

He arrived at the mosque, and found the hypocrites making excuses and lying to the Messenger ﷺ. He saw the Messenger ﷺ was accepting their excuses, forgiving them and even praying to Allah ﷻ to forgive them. However, being a true sincere and honest believer, he could not lie. He was just not able to lie.

He went up to the Messenger ﷺ, and the Messenger ﷺ smiled to him but was visibly angry, and he told him to come close and sit beside him. He then asked him: "What made you stay behind, didn't you prepare to come with us?" Kaab Ibn Malik replied: "By Allah, I was never in better health or wealth than I was on the day you left, and I had no excuse and no reason for not joining". The Messenger ﷺ told him to get up and leave until Allah ﷻ reveals his judgment. Only two other men had the courage and moral character to do the same as

Kaab Ibn Malik ؓ, accepting full responsibility for their actions and refusing to lie or make up excuses like the hypocrites did.

The Messenger ﷺ asked the Muslims to boycott the three men. No one was allowed to talk to them, not even return their greeting. Even their own families would not talk to them. The boycott continued for fifty days.

We must again stop at this point of the story and try to learn a lesson from the honesty of Kaab Ibn Malik ؓ. Even though he saw the Messenger ﷺ accepting the excuses and forgiving anyone who made up any excuse, he simply refused to lie. As a Muslim and a believer, he knew that lying was forbidden. He knew that he could not correct one sin by adding another sin to it. He knew that even if he lied and got away with it in this life, that Allah ﷻ knows the truth and will hold him accountable for this lie on the Day of Judgment. He knew how bad the consequences of saying the truth would be for him in this life. But he chose hardship and misery in this life over saying one lie and deserving the punishment from Allah ﷻ for it on the Day of Judgment.

We really should learn a lesson from the honesty of this man. How many of us would do what he did? How many of us would just have lied and made up an excuse and then said to ourselves that it is just a small lie, and that we will ask Allah ﷻ to forgive us later? How many of us would have passed this test of sincerity? He could not bring himself to lie. We

should follow his example, because this is the example of true and sincere Muslims. In fact, Allah ﷻ pointed to this beautiful moral character in these three men who stayed behind in verse 119 of *surat Al-Tawbah*:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ﴾

(Oh believers, fear Allah, and stand with the truthful ones.)

This verse came directly after the verse that mentioned the story of the three men, and although they committed a mistake by not adhering to the order of the Messenger ﷺ to go on the *Tabuk* expedition, Allah ﷻ forgave them and accepted their repentance, and Allah ﷻ mentioned them as "the truthful ones" in the Qur'an. Their truthfulness and high moral character saved them from their sins and ensured their forgiveness.

The story has a happy ending of course. Allah ﷻ, after 50 days, revealed the verse 118 of *surat Al-Tawbah*:

﴿وَعَلَى الثَّلَاثَةِ الَّذِينَ خُلِفُوا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا ضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَظَنُّوا أَن لَّا مَلْجَأَ مِن اللَّهِ إِلَّا إِلَيْهِ

ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَتُوبُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ﴾

«And to the three who were left behind (at the Battle of Tabuk), until the earth became narrow with all its vastness, and their souls became narrow for them, they knew there was no shelter from Allah except in Him. Then He turned to them (in mercy) so that they might also turn (in repentance). Allah is the Turner, the Most Merciful.»

Their forgiveness was revealed in the holy Qur'an, and it came down from above the seven heavens. It has been recited since that day, and will continue to be recited forever by millions of Muslims around the world. Allah ﷻ replaced their hardship and misery with the honour of vindication and of being mentioned in the holy Qur'an. This was their reward for their sincerity and honesty, even though they committed a sin and made a mistake. But they were sincere in their hearts, and they truly loved Allah ﷻ and the Messenger ﷺ.

When the verse of repentance was revealed concerning Kaab Ibn Malik, the Prophet ﷺ said to him; "Expect glad tidings every day from the moment you were born." (Al-Bukhari:4418, Muslim:6974)

From this we learn that it is *never too late to seek forgiveness*. It is never too late to turn a new page. Allah ﷻ forgives all sins, as long as we are sincere. As long as we love Allah ﷻ and the Messenger ﷺ in our hearts, and we ask for forgiveness sincerely, we shall be granted forgiveness by the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful.

The best days are when we sincerely repent to Allah ﷻ and our repentance is accepted. Repentance is one of the best blessings bestowed upon us by Allah ﷻ.

The Value of Time

The Most Precious Possession you Have!

If asked the question “what is the most precious thing you possess?” people will probably say, “Money, children, beauty, knowledge, health, etc...” These things may be precious but not *the most* precious compared with the importance of time. In fact, the most precious thing we have besides Islam is time.

The Notion of Time in the Qur'an

Time occurs several times in the Qur'an in the opening statements of several chapters as an object of oath made by Allah ﷻ. This implies that were it not important, Allah ﷻ would not have sworn by it. Here are some instances (object of oath in bold):

﴿وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَغْشَىٰ ۖ وَالنَّهَارِ إِذَا تَجَلَّىٰ﴾

﴿By the night as it conceals (the light). By the Day as it appears in glory.﴾ (Al-Layl:1-2)

﴿وَالضُّحَىٰ ۝ وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا سَجَىٰ﴾

«By the glorious morning light, and by the night when it is still.» (*Ad-Duha:1-2*)

﴿وَالْفَجْرِ ۝ وَلَيَالٍ عَشْرٍ﴾

«By the break of day, by the nights twice five.» (*Al-Fajr:1-2*)

﴿وَالشَّمْسِ وَضُحَاهَا ۝ وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا تَلَّهَا﴾

«By the sun and its (Glorious) splendour. By the moon as it follows him.» (*Ash-Shams:1-2*)

﴿وَالْعَصْرِ﴾

«By (the Token of) time (through the ages)» (*Al-Asr:1*)

﴿فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالشَّفَقِ﴾

«So I do call to witness the ruddy glow of sunset.» (*Al-Inshiqaq:16*)

What is the purpose of these oaths? Allah's ﷻ purpose is to warn man: "I swear by the most precious thing I have bestowed upon you (i.e. time)."

Our Religion Values Time...

Don't you know that all Islam rituals are linked to time? Take for example the five obligatory prayers. Allah ﷻ:

﴿إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَّوْقُوتًا﴾

(...for such prayers are enjoined the believers at stated times.) (*An-Nisa:103*)

Asked about the most beloved acts of worship to Allah ﷻ, the Prophet ﷺ replied, 'praying on time.' (Muslim: 250)

As for fasting during the month of Ramadan, Allah ﷻ says:

﴿أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ ۖ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِنْ

أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۗ وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ ۚ فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ

خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ ۗ وَأَنْ تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۖ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ﴾

«(Fasting) for a fixed number of days, but if any of you is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed number (should be made up) from days later. For those who can do it (with

hardship), is a ransom, the feeding of one that is indigent. But he that will give more, of his own free will, it is better for him. And it is better for you that you fast, if you only knew.) (Al-Baqara:184)

The Prophet ﷺ said: "Observe fasting when you sight the moon and break your fast when you sight the moon." (Tirmidhi:684)

As for pilgrimage (Hajj), Allah ﷻ says:

﴿الْحَجُّ أَشْهُرٌ مَّعْلُومَاتٌ﴾

«For Hajj are the months well known.» (Al-Baqara:197)

It means that the time to perform pilgrimage is set and known, and if a pilgrim misses it, his pilgrimage is not counted. For instance, the time to stand on Mount Arafat is 9th Dul-Hijja, so if you miss this appointment, your Hajj will not be accepted according to the verse «Al-Hajj is Arafat».

Even the time for paying tax is fixed. Muslims are required by Islamic law to pay *zakat* every year.

These are all examples that Allah ﷻ has set to draw your attention to the importance of time and to warn you not to squander it.

Our ancestors were very much concerned with the development of the clock and with timekeeping and punctuality. It is a pity we do not follow in their footsteps.

Non-Muslim, yet he got the Message!

I was once late for an appointment with a non-Muslim person who asked me the following embarrassing questions: "Are you Muslim?" "Yes, I am." "Do you pray?" "Yes, I do." "Do you fast?" "Yes, I do." "Have you performed Hajj?" "Yes, I have." "Do you observe the Friday prayer on time?" "Yes, I do." He went on, "It is very strange. Islam teaches Muslims important matters but they do not give them importance."

I was very embarrassed by his remarks, and felt he was accusing me of negligence.

Didn't We prolong your Age?

Remember that man will be asked on the Day of Judgment to task for the time he had. Note what was Allah's ﷻ Response when the disbelievers presented their feeble excuses for not following the messengers:

﴿أَوَلَمْ نُعَمِّرْكُمْ مَا يَتَذَكَّرُ فِيهِ مَنْ تَذَكَّرَ وَجَاءَكُمْ النَّذِيرُ فَذُوقُوا﴾

فَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ نَصِيرٍ

«Did we not give you long enough life so that he that would should receive admonition? And (moreover) the warner came to you. so taste you (the fruits of your

deeds). For the wrong-doers there is no helper.) (Fair: 37)

Furthermore, Allah ﷻ brands them wrongdoers (zalimun). They have wronged themselves by squandering time.

Where Did you Spend your Youth?

The Prophet ﷺ said: "The son of Adam will not pass away from Allah ﷻ until he is asked about five things: how did he spend his life, and how did he utilize his youth, from what means did he earn his wealth, and how did he spend it, and what did he do with his knowledge." (Tirmidi:2416)

Be warned that you will be asked to task for every moment you have spent in your youth. Imagine yourself standing before Allah ﷻ and opening up the box of your deeds which read: "I have spent my youth in watching T.V., surfing the net, playing football and socialising in cafés and clubs." Won't you feel ashamed, humiliated and guilty?

In contrast, imagine yourself standing before Allah ﷻ and opening up the box of your deeds which read: "I have spent my youth in attending religious circles, observing congregational prayers, spending in the Cause of Allah ﷻ, teaching children how to memorise the Qur'an, and so on and so forth." Won't you feel pleased with yourself that you know the value of time?

The choice now is yours. You either choose to make the most of your time and spend it wisely, or squander it in trivialities and life's splendours which will be of no avail to you on the Day of Judgment.

Make the Most of your Time

Al-Hasan al-Basri said, "Everyday at sunrise, the day calls man, saying, 'O son of Adam! I am a new day and I am a witness over your deeds, so make and take the most of me. If I go by, I will not come back until the Day of Judgment.'"

Another Muslim scholar said, "O son of Adam! You are made of breaths and days, and if these go, some and may be all of you will."

Appropriate Analogy

Given that your breaths and days are counted, it is very important that you make the most of them. Ibn Al-Qayyim said, "Every breath you let out and every drop of sweat that comes out of your body for the sake of other than worshipping and benefitting life shall be regrets on the Day of Judgment."

This is a matter of faith, and we have to give it its due importance. Your concern with time should be part of your worship. Some scholars said, "Part of Allah's ﷻ wrath on

His Servants' is their squandering of time, and part of Allah's ﷻ pleasure with His Servants is making their occupations exceed their spare time." This may sound absurd to try and make your occupations exceed your time, but it is a sign that Allah ﷻ loves you. Always feel the urge to remain busy all the time, and never feel discouraged by saying, 'This life is difficult, tiring, etc...' Be happy when you see yourself overwhelmed with your work.

However, make sure that your occupations are interesting and beneficial to Islam. This means that you whenever you are about to embark on a task, have the good intentions that such task will surely serve Islam, society, country and the Muslim nation at large. Hence, this is an appropriate analogy of delight and wrath.

Youth + Free Time = Beginning of Sin

Beware the free time you have, for it is the beginning of sin. Had the king of Egypt's wife been preoccupied with interesting and beneficial pursuits, she would not have seduced Yussuf عليه السلام. Observe how the Qur'an ridicules people's free time which, instead of being devoted to interesting and beneficial pursuits, is devoted to trivial matters:

﴿فَلَمَّا سَمِعَتْ بِمَكْرِهِنَّ أَرْسَلَتْ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَعْتَدَتْ لَهُنَّ مُتَّكَأً وَآتَتْ كُلَّ وَجْدَةٍ مِّنْهُنَّ سِكِّينًا وَقَالَتِ اخْرُجْ عَلَيْهِنَّ فَلَمَّا رَأَيْنَهُ أَكْبَرْنَهُ وَقَطَّعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ وَقُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلَّهِ مَا هَذَا بَشَرًا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا مَلَكٌ كَرِيمٌ﴾

(When she heard of their malicious talk, she sent for them and prepared a banquet for them. She gave each of them a knife and she said (to Yussuf), "Come out before them." When they saw him, they did extol him, and (in their amazement) cut their hands. They said, "(Allah) preserve us! No mortal is this! This is none other than a noble angel!") (Yussuf:31)

Imagine how much time the king's wife had spent in preparing the banquet, and imagine also the women who have nothing to do. They quickly rushed to the invitation.

What about us in the Present Time?

Our youth sleep for 12 hours and warn their mothers not to wake them up, for they have nothing to wake up for. "What about the lecture at the university?" "It is not that important to attend the first one." Go to a university yard and check. All that you find is scattered groups of students here and there, while the auditoriums or classrooms remain empty.

Young girls spend hours and hours in front of the mirror fixing their hair and makeup. Women spend long hours in

shopping malls, while children are wasted in the hands of servants and maids.

Employees reach their offices late and spend most of their time surfing the internet or chatting with their office mates.

A survey on the number of hours an average employee works reveals that of the 8 hours spent in the office only 15 minutes is counted as productive. The remaining hours are spent on playing online games or having unimportant telephone conversations. Isn't the salary he receives at the end of the month unlawful? Of course it is, because he gets paid for 8 hours of works while he only does 15 minutes.

Before it is too Late...

How many times have you seen examples of people who only when they grow old that they started doing things that they should have done when they were young? Examples of these are plenty in our everyday life, and you can sense their deep regret. I once met an old man at the door of the mosque tearfully staring at some young people. I asked him why he was crying, and he replied, "I only started going to the mosque when I grow older. When I looked at those youth, I regret for not going to the mosque when I was their age. Congratulations to them."

Many women started wearing *Hijab* only when they grow old! Where were they? They had free time, but they did not know how to spend it wisely.

By squandering our valuable time and not knowing how to spend our free time in vigorous pursuits, we have become an easy target for our enemy.

Killing Time is a Crime!

How many times have you heard the phrase "Kill time?" People who kill time or idle away time are cafe goers whose concern is to drink that cup of coffee or tea, and smoke water pipe (*Shisha*). The country is in a mess and the nation is in crisis while they are sitting in cafes idling away time. In fact these people do not kill time, they kill themselves. It is a piece-meal suicide. It is a pity we do not know the value of time. It is the westerner who really knows the true value of time. We can see him now immigrating to our country and starting a business, while we slumber. It is time we woke up and come to grips with our pitiful situation; if we don't, our misery will heap and our crisis will deepen:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ﴾

(Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves.) (Ar-Ra'd:11)

If we don't come to grips with our critical situation by knowing the worth of every minute that passes by, by turning to Allah, by arming ourselves with knowledge, we are still far away from achieving victory, probably in hundred year's time.

Wake up Muslims! Know the value of every minute of your time decide yourself that your breath will not be wasted away.

Full Alert!

Our ancestors truly knew the worth of time. Al-Muhasibi said: "By Allah ﷻ! If time were a commodity for sale, I would have spent all my money in it and served the Muslims." "Where would you buy time from?" They asked him. "I would buy it from those who possess plenty of free time."

Let us emulate our predecessors in exploiting our free time to the full. Let us advise our youth to devote their free time to pursuits that will benefit and serve the Muslim nation. Let us advise the Muslim women to develop hobbies such as reading books or learn new languages instead of spending their free time glued to the T.V. set.

A young doctor asked me to recommend a book on the interpretation of the Qur'an, and I recommended Sayyid Qutb's *Fi Dilali Al-Qur'an*. I was surprised when I met him

after four days. He finished reading the first volume book and he told me that he was enjoying the book and learning so much about the Qur'an.

Remember, he is a doctor, a busy man, yet he finds time to read such voluminous book. Won't you, too, find time to start reading similar books?

Strong Determination!

Do you know that authors have stopped writing because people do not read anymore? Instead of reading interesting material, people look for magazines on how to dress, how to keep one's hair soft and shiny, how to lose weight, and even how to walk.

Many a land has become infertile due to people's laziness, and many a company have gone bust due to employees' lack of motivation and cheating.

In contrast, our ancestor's achievements fill the annals of history. They had strong determination and were well-aware of the value of time.

Ibn Al-Jawzi was stopped by a man who asked him, "Let's chat for a while." Ibn Al-Jawzi replied, "Let's stop the sun, then."

Ibn Uqayl produced an 800-Volume book entitled *al-Funun* (The Arts), the largest book to date since the creation of Adam ﷺ.

Ibn Uqayl said: "I am in my eighties, yet I have a strong determination to make the most of my time just like the one I had when I was in my twenties."

He also said, "I don't eat like you do." (i.e. I don't have time like you have to eat). They asked, "Then, how do you eat?" "I pour some water on bread and wait until it turns soft, and then eat it fast so that I won't waste time."

No wonder why our ancestors ruled the world for hundred years! We don't expect you to do the same, but at least don't spend four hours eating a meal. Young people often eat out, and spend up to four hours in a restaurant and promise themselves that victory is forthcoming. Victory does not come to those who wait and to those who think with their bellies.

Blessed Age!

It is common that some people live short but their names are engraved in the memories of history for so many years, and there are some people who live long but their names are soon erased from the annals of history. This means the worth of age does not lie in being long, but rather in the contribution of quality works. Take for instance Usama Ibn Zayd ؓ. He

led the Muslim army at the age of 16. And it was not any army. In fact, it comprised senior companions. The Prophet ﷺ remarked, "It is as if he were born to lead." (*Al-Bukhari*:4469).

Muhammad al-Fatih conquered the city of Constantinople at the age of 23, the conquest of which defied many Muslims before him.

Saad Ibn Muaz ؓ embraced Islam at the age of 30 and died at 37. In just seven years, look what happened: This was the man whose conversion to Islam lit the entire city of Madina, the man who fought heroically in the *Battle of Badr*, the man whose judgment in a certain issue matched that of Allah ﷻ from above seven heavens, the man whose death shook the Throne of Allah ﷻ, whose funeral was attended by seventy thousand angels, and whose coffin was in fact carried by seventy thousand angels. About him the Prophet ﷺ said: "This is a companion whose death shook the Throne of Allah ﷻ, for whom the gates of heaven were opened, and whose funeral was attended by seventy thousand angels." (*Muslim*:6295 and *Tirmidhi*:3848)

Imam An-Nawawi, the author of *Riyad As-Salihin*, died at the age of 40. He was unmarried, and it was said that the reason was his preoccupation with knowledge: he produced 500 books. He once said, "By Allah ﷻ. I don't eat nor sleep. I stay in this state until I fall to the ground." It is said that he did not have time to eat. His mother would bring

food to him, but he would say, 'O mother. I am busy acquiring knowledge.' She would then feed him, and he would keep on working until dawn when he would ask her, 'where is the food?' and she would say, 'I have fed you.' 'I swear, I was so engrossed in work I did not realize what was happening.'

We Wish to Build a Nation!

Omar رضي الله عنه said to Mu'awiyya Ibn Khadij: "If I sleep during the day, it will be unfair to my people, and if I sleep during the night, I will be unfair to myself. So how can I sleep when I have these two, Mu'awiyah?"¹

As he lie dying, Abu Hanifa woke up and asked his student Abu Yusuf, "Let's discuss the issue of which way is preferable, to perform pilgrimage on foot or riding." Abu Yusuf replied, 'It is not time now for this. Focus on your last moments.' Abu Hanifa defiantly replied, 'O son! If I ever have one short moment in my life to serve a Muslim in his religion, I will sacrifice it.'"

Ibn Rajab said, "I have written with my hands more than 2000 books." In fact, they calculated the number of books in relation to his age and found out that he produced 9 books a day.

¹ Imam Ahmad, *Az-Zuhd* (p.123)

What great men! They wanted to build the Muslim nation. In fact, the nation was built, but remained stagnant for 1300 years.

Then came the last 100 years, and all you can see is the youth's preoccupations with the latest mobile phone, the latest portable, the newest restaurant in the city centre, and the latest song, etc... Do you really expect to build a strong Muslim nation in this fashion.

Dear young brothers! Wake up and see where you are heading for!

Rat Race!

This is crystal clear if you read the following verse:

﴿وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ﴾

«Be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord, and for a Garden whose width is that (of the whole) of the heavens and of the earth, prepared for the righteous.»
(Al-Imran:133)

سَابِقُوا إِلَى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا كَعَرْضِ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ
أُعِدَّتْ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ
وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٢١﴾

«Be you foremost (in seeking) forgiveness from your Lord, and a Garden (of Bliss), the width whereof is as the width of heaven and earth, prepared for those who believe in Allah and His apostles. That is the Grace of Allah, which He bestows on whom He pleases, and Allah is the Lord of Grace abounding.» (Al-Hadid:21)

﴿إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يُسْرِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ﴾

«These (three) were ever quick in emulation in good works.» (Al-Anbiyaa:90)

﴿أُولَٰئِكَ يُسْرِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَهُمْ هَا سَابِقُونَ﴾

«It is these who hasten in every good work, and these who are foremost in them.» (Al-Muminun:61)

It is a rat race, but it should be directed towards serving Islam and Muslims.

In this context, the Prophet ﷺ said: "Hasten to do good deeds before you are overtaken by one of the seven afflictions." Then (giving a warning) he said, "Are you waiting for such poverty which will make you unmindful of devotion; or prosperity which will make you corrupt, or disease as will disable you, or such senility as will make you mentally unstable, or sudden death, or Ad-Dajjal who is the worst expected absent, or the Hour, and the Hour will be most grievous and most bitter?" (Tirmidhi: 2306)

Brothers and sisters! Now that you have known the precious value of time, seize every single minute of it and spend it wisely. Time is often likened in Arab tradition to gold, but it is more than that. Gold is a commodity, whereas time never comes back if wasted, and if time is wasted, your age is wasted, too.

Steadfastness

Where is the Iron Will?

A person's strong will is often compared to iron. Hence, the metaphor 'iron will' is used to describe a person with strong and indomitable will. Besides its strength, this metal has the characteristics of heating up and cooling down fast. Ironically, some people possess only the characteristics of the iron's fast change rather than its strength. Simply put, some people may have a burning desire towards a certain problem facing our nation, but would soon freeze and feel paralysed to step forward. This is worrying, for it is becoming a common symptom in our nation.

Disturbing Cases!

A young girl would wear *Hijab* at the beginning of Ramadan and go to different mosques to perform *Salatu at-Tarawih*. This is a good sign and a very good start. Sadly, this girl would take her *Hijab* off two or three months later. Why?

A man would resist taking bribery for a very long time, then his resistance would wear out and he, as a result, would start accepting it. Why?

A young man would ardently go to the mosque and observe the congregational prayers every day, but he would soon start giving up. Why?

More to the point, how often have you heard someone say, 'I used to go to observe *Salatu al-Fajr* every day in the mosque, but then I was carried away by life's splendours and gave it up'?

Is this Muhammad's ﷺ nation? Is this the nation of truth and comprehensive law?

An Innate Character or a Bad Habit?

The enemies of Islam got to know this dual character of enthusiasm and apathy that we possess, and started attacking us from this weakness. When our enthusiasm reaches its highest point, they would let us do what we want: shout, protest, act, etc...because they know for certain that we will cool down and forget all about it. They use this strategy of 'cooling down' in dealing with us.

Is this dual character a defect in us? In other words, why does our enthusiasm wear out?

Money, children, life's splendours, earning a living are all every day distracters. But, who will take care of the nation's pressing and urgent issues? Isn't that enough to keep us enthusiastic?

What shall we do to keep our enthusiasm going? First, we don't need people whose enthusiasm tire out fast. The nation's urgent issues should take away your heart and mind. Remember, quantity never matters. The companions were only few but they stood firm on the truth until they died.

Holding Firm!

We must stand firm on the following principles:

- The truth.
- Defense of our religion
- Obedience to Allah ﷻ.

These are the characteristics of a true Muslim person. The Prophet ﷺ lived up to these principles and so did the companions.

Firmness does not Interfere with Flexibility

Some young enthusiasts may think that firmness could mean stubbornness. On the contrary, there are certain issues that

require firmness, and there are others that require flexibility. The Prophet ﷺ is the best example to emulate. Take for instance the *Hijab*. This is an obligation that does not accept flexibility or tolerance. Flexibility, however, may be acceptable in persuading someone or getting your message across. Put differently, *wearing Hijab* is an obligation that does not accept any tolerance or flexibility. However, it is acceptable to be flexible in the way you persuade someone to wear it or the way you get your message across to them.

Examples of Standing Firm on the Truth

Imam Ibn Hanbal: During his life time, some philosophers put forward some claims concerning the Glorious Qur'an that were unacceptable in Islamic Law. These claims dominated for a while until people started to believe in them. In response, Imam Ibn Hanbal defended the Qur'an by challenging and refuting such claims. He was firm in his defense of the truth, though he was threatened to give up and later imprisoned. While in jail, he would often say, "I am not afraid of being in prison, for it is like my house. I am not afraid of being killed, for it is martyrdom for me. However, I fear being lashed." In fact when he was summoned for lashing, he was fearful and worried. In the yard where he was supposed to be lashed, Imam Ahmad spotted a notorious thief known as Abu Haytham At-Tayyar who said to him, "O Imam, I was given 18000 lashes spread across my years of

stealing, and I stood firm on falsehood. So, hold you firm to the truth... O Imam! If you ever live, you live a pleasant life, and if you die, you die as a martyr..." Imam Ahmad said, "The thief made me stand firm." Imam Ahmad kept on asking forgiveness from Allah ﷻ on behalf of the thief. When the Imam's son asked him why he was doing so for a thief, he replied, "He made me firm." A man passer-by offered some water to the Imam as he was being flogged, but the Imam refused, saying, "I am fasting." Another man passed by and said to the Imam, "You are losing weight, and you have children. Give them what they want (i.e. give up)." Imam Ahmad replied, "If this is the way you think, then I am fine. Look at people. They want a word from me. Remember, the scholar's gaffe is the scholar's humility."

What a firm man! There is no room for comparison. Some of us would for some people would give up praying the optional prayers and even the compulsory ones, let alone tasks such as the one for which our noted Imam agonizingly endured so much pain! Imam Ahmad lived up to firmness. Some of his students said, "I have been with Imam Ahmad for twenty years: in winter and summer, in the hot and cold weather, day and night, and there is not a day that passed by but that his firmness on the truth increased."

Omar Al-Mukhtar

He was a fighter in the Cause of Allah ﷻ at 73. He spent his life in seeking the truth and standing firm thereon. He was arrested and questioned by the Italian authorities. Here is a brief account of the interview:

Q: Have you fought the Italian state?

A: Yes.

Q: Have you incited people to fight the Italian state?

A: Yes.

Q: Are you aware of the punishment for such acts?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you confirm your actions?

A: Yes.

Q: How long have you been fighting the Italian state?

A: For 10 years.

Q: Do you regret what you have done?

A: No.

Q: Are you aware that you will receive the death penalty?

A: Yes.

At this moment, the sentencing judge said: "I am really sad that your fate is ending in this fashion."

Omar al-Mukhtar confidently and calmly replied, "On the contrary, it is the best way to end my life."

The judge tried for the last time to convince him to order the Mujahidin to give up the fight against the Italians in Libya in return for a public pardon, but Omar al-Mukhtar stared at him for a moment, and then said his classic saying: "The index finger I move during my statement of *Shahada* during prayers will never dare to write words of falsehood."

Omar al-Mukhtar died as a martyr, but to us he is still alive in the memories of those who stood firm on the truth...

Said Ibn Jubayr

When Said Ibn Jubayr entered into the court of the ruthless governor, Al-Hajjaj Ibn Yusuf Ath-Thaqafi, the latter asked the former, "What is your name?"

"Said Ibn Jubayr."

"Rather, you are 'the miserable one, son of the broken one,'" said Al-Hajjaj, immediately showing hostility towards Said

ﷺ. This was the way he treated all of his enemies - basically, anyone who criticized him was his enemy.

"Rather, my mother knows my name better than you do," said Said ﷺ, with the calmness and composure that one should show when responding to an ignorant person.

"You are wretched, and so is your mother," said Al-Hajjaj.

"As for the unseen world, One other than you knows it," said Said ﷺ.

"I will cause you to change in this world with a blazing fire," said Al-Hajjaj.

"Had I known that that was in your hands, I would have taken you as a god," said Said ﷺ.

"And what do you say about Muhammad?" asked Al-Hajjaj.

"He is the Prophet of mercy ﷺ, the Imam of guidance, and the Messenger of the Lord of all that exists, sent to all of mankind with a good exhortation."

"And what do you say about Ali bin Abu-Talib?" Al-Hajjaj asked. "Is he in Paradise or in the Hell-fire?"

"Had I entered it, I would have seen its dwellers," said Said ﷺ.

"And what do you say about the Caliphates?"

"I am not a guarantor for them," said Said ﷺ. "Each person is held ransom for only that which his own hands have reaped."

"Should I curse them or praise them?" Al-Hajjaj asked.

"I will not say that which I do not know," said Said ﷺ. "I am required to be accountable only for the affairs of my own soul."

"Who among them do you like best?" Al-Hajjaj asked.

"The one whom the Creator (Allah ﷻ) is most pleased with," said Said ﷺ.

"And who among them is Allah most pleased with?" Al-Hajjaj asked.

"The knowledge thereof is with the One who knows their secrets and their private discourses," said Said ﷺ.

"And what kind of a man will I be on the Day of Resurrection?" Al-Hajjaj asked.

"I am too insignificant for Allah to reveal to me the unseen world," said Said ﷺ.

"You refuse to be truthful with me," said Al-Hajjaj.

"To the contrary, (I said what I said because) I did not want to lie to you," said Said ﷺ.

"Forget about all of this," Al-Hajjaj said. "Tell me why you never laugh."

"I have never seen anything that should make me laugh," said Said ﷺ. "And how can a created being laugh when he was created from clay, which is consumed by fire!"

"Then what is the matter with us that we laugh?" asked Al-Hajjaj.

"Hearts (of people) are not at the same level," said Said ﷺ. "Have you ever seen any form of entertainment (i.e., musical instruments)?"

"I do not know what you are referring to," said Said ﷺ. Al-Hajjaj then asked one of his underlings to bring a lute (a stringed instrument) and a flute. When they were brought and someone began to play the lute and blow into the flute, Said ﷺ began to cry.

"What is making you cry?" Al-Hajjaj asked.

"O Hajjaj, you have reminded me of a tremendous matter," said Said ﷺ. "By Allah ﷻ, after what I have seen here, I will never eat to satiety, quench my thirst, or wear (nice) clothing, and I will continue to remain in a state of sadness."

"Fine, but what is your view concerning this entertainment?" Al-Hajjaj asked.

"O Hajjaj, by Allah ﷻ, that is the sadness (I am referring to). As for this blowing instrument, it reminded me of a tremendous Day, the Day on which the trumpet will be blown. As for the lute, a tree was wrongfully cut (for it to be

made). And as for the strings, they are from the bowels of sheep (which were wrongfully slaughtered (since they weren't slaughtered for food or any beneficial use, but rather for forbidden entertainment)). They will be resurrected with you on the Day of Resurrection."

"I am more beloved to Allah ﷻ than you are?" Al-Hajjaj asked.

"No one goes to his Lord until he knows how he ranks with Him," said Said ﷺ. "And Allah ﷻ knows best about the unseen."

"And how is it possible that I will not go to my Lord as I am today (i.e., dignified - as he deemed himself to be)?" said Al-Hajjaj. "I am with the Imam of the *Jama'a* (the main body of Muslims), while you are with the Imam of division and *Al-Fitna* (trial or tribulation, the source of discord)."

"I am not outside of the *Jama'a*," said Said ﷺ. "Nor am I pleased with the trials or tribulations; but the decree of Allah ﷻ is executed: nothing can prevent it (from being executed)."

"What do you think about that which we are gathering for the Leader of the Believers?" Al-Hajjaj asked.

"I have not seen (what it is that you are gathering for him)," said Said ﷺ. Al-Hajjaj ordered for gold, silver, pearls, and precious jewels to be brought to him; when they came, he put them between the hands of Said Ibn Jubayr ﷺ.

"This is good, if you fulfill its condition," said Said ﷺ.
"And what is its condition?" Al-Hajjaj asked.

"If you use what you gathered to purchase safety from the Greater Terror on the Day of Resurrection, then that is fine. Otherwise,

(يَوْمَ تَرَوْنَهَا تَذْهَلُ كُلُّ مُرْضِعَةٍ عَمَّا أَرْضَعَتْ وَتَضَعُ كُلُّ ذَاتِ
حَمْلٍ حَمْلَهَا)

«...every suckling mother shall forget Her suckling, her nursling, and every pregnant one will drop her load» (Al-Hajj:2)

"Nothing that is gathered for the world is good other than that which is good and purified," continued Said ﷺ.

"Then you consider our action of gathering (this wealth) good and pure?" Al-Hajjaj asked.

"In your view, you have gathered it," said Said ﷺ. "And you know better whether it is good and pure (i.e., whether you have procured it through lawful means)."

"Would you like to have something from it (i.e., from this treasure)?" Al-Hajjaj asked.

"I do not love that which Allah does not love," said Said ﷺ.
"Woe unto you!" exclaimed Al-Hajjaj.

"The destruction (that you have invoked upon me) is reserved for those who are sent away from Paradise and are made to enter the Hell-fire," said Said ﷺ.

"Choose, O Said, the method in which I will kill you," said Al-Hajjaj.

"Choose for yourself, O Hajjaj," said Said ﷺ. "For by Allah ﷻ, whatever method you use to kill me, Allah ﷻ will kill you in the same manner in the Hereafter."

"Do you want me to forgive you?" Al-Hajjaj asked.

"If there is any forgiveness, then it is from Allah," said Said ﷺ. "As for you, you have no exoneration and no excuse (for what you do)."

"Take him away and kill him," said Al-Hajjaj to his guards. As Said ﷺ was being taken away, he laughed. When Al-Hajjaj was informed about his laughing (which was something novel for Said ﷺ), he ordered for him to be brought back to him. When Said ﷺ returned, Al-Hajjaj asked, "O Said, what has made you laugh?"

"I became amazed at your temerity and brazenness in your dealings with Allah, which is contrasted by His forbearance and leniency towards you," said Said ﷺ.

Al-Hajjaj then ordered for one of the guards to bring a *Nat'a* (a special kind of carpet that was made of leather). It would be rolled out onto the ground on special occasions only - when someone was about to be killed or tortured. And its purpose was to prevent the blood of the person being tortured or executed from splattering all over the floor, especially if the floor was made of marble or expensive material, as was often the case in the castles of governors and leaders. When the *Nat'a* was laid out and Said ﷺ was moved onto it, Al-Hajjaj said to his guards, "Kill him."

"First, let me perform two units of prayer," said Said ﷺ. Having faced the *Qiblah* and commenced his prayer, Said ﷺ recited this Verse:

﴿إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلدِّينِ فَطَرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ حَنِيفًا وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ﴾

«Indeed, I have turned my face toward He who created the heavens and the earth, inclining toward truth, and I am not of those who associate others with Allah.» (*Al-Maida:79*)

"Turn him so that he does not face the *Qiblah*," said Al-Hajjaj. When the guards executed his instructions, Said ﷺ recited this verse:

﴿فَأَيْنَمَا تُولُوْا فَتَمَّ وَجْهُهُ اَللّٰهُ اِنَّ اَللّٰهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيْمٌ﴾

(...so wherever you turn yourselves or your faces there is the Face of Allah.) (*Al-Baqara:115*)

"Put his face onto the ground," said Al-Hajjaj, more furious than he probably ever was before in his life. Referring to the ground and the earth, Said ﷺ then recited Allah's ﷻ saying:

﴿مِنْهَا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ وَفِيْهَا نُعِيْدُكُمْ وَمِنْهَا نُخْرِجُكُمْ تَارَةً اٰخَرٰى﴾

«From the earth We created you, and into it We will return you, and from it We will extract you another time.» (*Ta-Ha:55*)

"Slaughter him!" exclaimed Al-Hajjaj.

"I make you bear witness, O Hajjaj, that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah alone, and He has no partner, and that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger," said Said ﷺ. "I keep these words with you in safekeeping, O Hajjaj, until you meet me on the Day of Resurrection."

Said ﷺ then invoked Allah ﷻ saying, "O Allah, do not give him the power to kill anyone after me." They then killed him.

After he was killed, Al-Hajjaj lived for only fifteen more days. In what remained of his days, he would constantly call out in pain, "What is it between me and Said Ibn Jubayr? Whenever I want to sleep, he takes me by the leg (to prevent me from sleeping)."

One narration indicates that he lived for forty days after he had killed Said ؓ. It is mentioned in that narration that whenever he slept, he would see Said ؓ in his dream grab him by his garment and say, "O enemy of Allah ﷻ! Why did you kill me?" While he was awake, Al-Hajjaj would ruefully say, "What is it between me and Said Ibn Jubayr, what is it between me and Said Ibn Jubayr?"

It is also reported that, during his last days, Al-Hajjaj became paralyzed, so that if he placed his hand on a burning stove, his skin would burn, yet he wouldn't feel anything. Also, he became very ill; his illness was attributed to worms that entered into his body.

When Al-Hajjaj summoned Al-Hasan Al-Basri to come to him, Al-Hasan simply said, "Did I not tell you not to stand in the way of the scholars! You have killed Said ؓ!"

"I didn't call you here in order to ask you to supplicate for me (i.e., for my cure)," said Al-Hajjaj. "I only called you here so that Allah can grant me rest (i.e., death) from the condition that I am in." Shortly thereafter, Al-Hajjaj died. And it would not be surprising if we were to learn that his

last words were: "What is it between me and Said Ibn Jubayr!"

Are you after that going to stand firm on the truth like those men?

Are you going to stand firm on the truth when people give up?

Are you going to keep on praying even if people discarded praying?

Are you going to remain close to Allah ﷻ even if people neglect their religion?

It is true to say that life's changes make us vulnerable to change. Tribulations (*al-fitan*) will arise amongst the people, especially towards the Day of Judgment, and the one, the Prophet ﷺ said, "who remains steadfast upon his religion in these days of *fitan* will be like one who holds onto a burning cinder (or burning piece of coal)." (Tirmidi: 2260)

However, it is not impossible. The Prophet ﷺ managed to change and influence his companions who were the embodiment of tribalism, ignorance and the like.

In fact Allah ﷻ says about the human soul:

﴿قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا ۖ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا﴾

«Truly he succeeds who purifies it, and he fails who corrupts it.» (Ash-Shams:9-10)

The Prophet ﷺ said: "One becomes learned by learning. One becomes gentle by behaving gently, and one becomes patient by showing patience." (Ibn Hajar: *Fath al-Bari*, 1/161)

We may infer from the above hadith that a good character may be acquired, and diseases of the soul, like those of the body, are curable according to the hadith: "There is no disease but that Allah ﷻ has made a cure for it except ageing." (Abu Daud: 3855, Tirmidhi:2038 and Ibn Majah:3436)

Steadfastness in Defending Islam

Your Religion...Your Religion!

Tradition has it that at every battle fought by the Muslims, the Prophet ﷺ would create a banner for it to boost the spirit of the companions and fighters if it ever got low. For example, the Battle of Badr was fought under the banner of 'Ahad...Ahad (*The One...The One*)', and the Battle of Uhud was fought under the banner of "Your Religion...Your Religion... Your Flesh....Your Blood..." These banners incite firmness. In other words, it is as if the banners say: "O brother! Live for Islam...and be firm to serve it."

In Al-Khandaq (Trenches) Battle, the banner was: "O Mansur (the Helped/Assisted)! Die! Die! You are Being Helped! You Are Being Helped! Go forth, fight and die. Death is not defeat, for you are being assisted, and Allah ﷻ is taking care of that, both in your life or death."

Standing firm on your religion is saying to yourself: "I shall hold on fast to my religion even if people give up. I will

hold their hands and guide them to the truth and to the Right Path even if they ridicule me. The most important for me is to invite them back to religion adopting the optimum methods as stipulated by the Qur'an and Sunna.

Invite to the Way of Allah ﷻ with Wisdom...

Firmness may be taken at face value by some youth who think that it means arguing and even disputing and never giving up your right. On the contrary, *firmness* is remaining steadfast in what you believe in and saying to yourself: "I will talk to people using wisdom. I will show love and mercy toward them. I will not only talk to them but try to transfer my love for them to their hearts, using wisdom and beautiful preaching because our religion is a religion of love, mercy and noble values. Allah ﷻ says:

﴿ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ﴾

«Invite (all) to the way of Your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching.» (An-Nahl:125)

The Qur'an is Calling you, so be Firm!

Aisha said that the Prophet's ﷺ conduct complied with the Qur'an. Hence, one of the most reiterated supplication made by the Prophet ﷺ during his prayers was: "O Changer of

hearts! Make my heart stand firm on Your Religion." (Tirmidi:3522 and 3587)

One might ask, "Did the Prophet ﷺ really need it?" Yes, he did because firmness in inviting people to our religion is a great and onerous mission. In fact, it is the most precious and delicate task Allah ﷻ has assigned to man.

How many issues have you felt enthusiastic about, but then tired out after a short while? Remember that defending Islam, considering this religion valuable and remaining firm are the greatest tributes that will lead to change.

The Qur'an urges us to hold firm in several instances, among which are:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا لَقِيتُمْ فِئَةً فَاثْبُتُوا وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

لَعَلَّكُمْ تَفْلِحُونَ﴾

«O you who believe! When you meet a force, be firm, and call Allah in remembrance much (and often); that you may prosper.» (Al-Anfal:45)

﴿وَكَايْنٍ مِّنْ نَّبِيٍّ قَاتَلَ مَعَهُ رِيشُونَ كَثِيرٌ فَمَا وَهَنُوا لِمَا أَصَابَهُمْ فِي

سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَمَا ضَعُفُوا وَمَا اسْتَكَانُوا وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الصَّابِرِينَ﴾

«How many of the prophets fought (in Allah's ﷻ way), and with them (fought) large bands of godly men? But they never lost heart if they met with disaster in Allah's way, nor did they weaken (in will) nor give in. And Allah loves those who are firm and steadfast.» (Al-Imran:146)

«They are godly» implies that they have a firm, strong and well-cemented relationship with Allah ﷻ.

Here is what they said:

﴿وَمَا كَانَ قَوْلُهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَإِسْرَافَنَا فِي أَمْرِنَا
وَتَبَتْ أَفْدَامَنَا وَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ﴾ ﴿٤٧﴾ فَقَاتِلَهُمْ اللَّهُ
نُورِ الدُّنْيَا وَحُسْنِ ثَوَابِ الْآخِرَةِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْحَسَنِينَ﴾

«All that they said was: "Our Lord! Forgive us our sins and anything we may have done that transgressed our duty. Establish our feet firmly, and help us against those that resist faith." And Allah gave them a reward in this world, and the excellent reward of the Hereafter, for Allah loves those who do good.» (Al-Imran:147-148)

Why did they say so? They said so because they were firm. Today, the entire nation faces a crisis. It is no longer the

crisis of a specific segment in Muslim society. The entire nation must stand firm. Everything is at stake, whether the young man who must stand firm on his faith or the young girl who must stand firm on wearing her Hijab.

We are tested by a number of crises, and we must stand firm to overcome them. We are no different from previous generations when Allah ﷻ pointed out their enemy's attack and urged them to stand firm:

﴿الَّذِينَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ إِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ جَمَعُوا لَكُمْ فَاخْشَوْهُمْ فَزَادَهُمْ
إِيمَانًا وَقَالُوا حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ﴾

«Men said to them: "A great army is gathering against you" and frightened them, but it (only) increased their faith. They said: "For us Allah suffices, and He is the best disposer of affairs."» (Al-Imran:173)

For the firm person, Allah ﷻ is enough. And as usual, the firm always loves victory however threatened, intimidated and ridiculed he may have been:

﴿فَانْقَلَبُوا بِنِعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَفَضْلٍ لَّمْ يَمَسَّ لَهُمْ سُوءٌ وَاتَّبَعُوا رِضْوَانَ
اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَظِيمٍ﴾

«And they returned with Grace and Bounty from Allah. No harm ever touched them, for they followed the good pleasure of Allah. And Allah is the Lord of bounties unbounded.» (Al-Imran:174)

Today, we desperately need firm people who are adamant about reform and change, and have an unshakeable conviction that in firmness there is victory so long as for them: «Allah suffices, and He is the best disposer of affairs.» This was the phrase said by Ibn Abbas ؓ, by Ibrahim ؓ when he was thrown into the blazing fire, by Mosses ؑ when his followers were faced by the sea before them and the Pharaohs behind them, and said to him hysterically, «We are trapped.», and said by Muhammad's ﷺ companions at the eminent attack:

«الَّذِينَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ إِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ جَمَعُوا لَكُمْ فَاخْشَوْهُمْ فَزَادَهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَقَالُوا حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ»

«Men said to them: "A great army is gathering against you" and frightened them, but it (only) increased their faith. They said: "For us Allah suffices, and He is the best disposer of affairs."» (Al-Imran:173)

More to the point, when the believers saw the huge number of confederate forces who were 10 thousands in the Battle of al-Ahzab, it was only normal to fear such force. However, the firm did not fear anything. They reacted by saying:

«وَلَمَّا رَأَى الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْأَحْزَابَ قَالُوا هَذَا مَا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَصَدَقَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَمَا زَادَهُمْ إِلَّا إِيمَانًا وَتَسْلِيمًا»

«When the believers saw the Confederate forces, they said: "This is what Allah and His Messenger had promised us, and Allah and His Messenger told us what was true." And it only added to their faith and their zeal in obedience.» (Al-Ahzab:22)

This is what went on in their minds: Since the Confederate forces gathered their might to kill us, then we are on the truth. This is what Allah ﷻ and His Messenger have promised us, and Allah and His Messenger told us what was true. Hence, observe the description which follows and which fits them well:

«مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رِجَالٌ»

«Among the believers are men...» (Al-Ahzab:23)

If you Live up to the Principles of Islam, you Live a Great Life!

If you exist just for the sake of existing; that is, working, getting married, having children and dying, then this is a mundane goal in life; you will live a worthless life. However, if your goal is to serve Islam, you will enjoy every moment of your life and live a happy and worthwhile life. Do you know why? Because you are telling Allah ﷻ: "I exist so that Your Religion remain valuable O Lord of the Worlds."

The annals of history are replete with people who sacrificed their wealth, children and souls for the sake of defending Islam. What about you? At least, make sure that religion is your most valuable possession, and make sure that your only dream is to see Islam rise high. Stay firm and say to yourself: "I will remain fervent in guiding people to the truth and in serving this religion."

Examples of Firmness in Defending Religion

Here are some examples which reveal that firmness is one of the believers' traits whenever and wherever they are. The examples, which include a young boy, a woman and a companion, indicate that firmness is not gender or age specific.

The firmness of the sorcerer's apprentice

Imam Ahmad recorded from Suhayb ؓ that the Prophet ﷺ said: "Among the people who came before you, there was a king who had a sorcerer, and when that sorcerer became old, he said to the king, 'I have become old and my time is nearly over, so please send me a boy whom I can teach magic.' So, he sent him a boy and the sorcerer taught him magic. Whenever the boy went to the sorcerer, he sat with a monk who was on the way and listened to his speech and admired them. So, when he went to the sorcerer, he passed by the monk and sat there with him; and on visiting the sorcerer the latter would thrash him. So, the boy complained about this to the monk. The monk said to him, "Whenever you are afraid of the sorcerer, say to him: 'My people kept me busy.' And whenever you are afraid of your people, say to them: 'The sorcerer kept me busy.' So the boy carried on like that (for some time). Then a huge terrible creature appeared on the road and the people were unable to pass by. The boy said, "Today I shall know whether the sorcerer is better or the monk is better." So, he took a stone and said, "O Allah! If the deeds and actions of the monk are liked by You better than those of the sorcerer, then kill this creature so that the people can cross (the road)." Then he struck it with a stone killing it and the people passed by on the road.

The boy came to the monk and informed him about it. The monk said to him, "O my son! Today you are better than I, and you have achieved what I see! You will be put to trial. And in case you are put to trial, do not inform (them) about me." The boy used to treat the people suffering from congenital blindness, leprosy, and other diseases. There was a courtier of the king who had become blind and he heard about the boy. He came and brought a number of gifts for the boy and said, "All these gifts are for you on the condition that you cure me." The boy said, "I do not cure anybody; it is only Allah ﷻ who cures people. So, if you believe in Allah ﷻ and supplicate to Him, He will cure you." So, he believed in and supplicated to Allah ﷻ, and Allah ﷻ cured him.

Later, the courtier came to the king and sat at the place where he used to sit before. The king said, "Who gave you back your sight?" The courtier replied, "My Lord." The king then said, "I did". The courtier said, "No, my Lord and your Lord – Allah ﷻ". The king said, "Do you have another Lord beside me?" The courtier said, "Yes, your Lord and my Lord is Allah ﷻ." The king tortured him and did not stop until he told him about the boy. So, the boy was brought to the king and he said to him, "O boy! Has your magic reached to the extent that you cure congenital blindness, leprosy and other diseases?" He said, "I do not cure anyone". Only Allah ﷻ can cure." The king said, "Me". The boy replied, "No." The king asked, "Do you have another Lord besides me?" The

boy answered, "My Lord and your Lord is Allah ﷻ." So, he tortured him also until he told about the monk. Then the monk was brought to him and the king said to him, "Abandon your religion." The monk refused and so the king ordered a saw to be brought which was placed in the middle of his head and he fell, sawn in two. Then it was said to the man who used to be blind, "Abandon your religion." He refused to do so, and so a saw was brought and placed in the middle of his head and he fell, sawn in two. Then the boy was brought and it was said to him, "Abandon your religion." He refused and so the king sent him to the top of such and such mountain with some people. He told the people, "Ascend up the mountain with him till you reach its peak, then see if he abandons his religion; otherwise, throw him from the top." They took him and when they ascended to the top, he said, "O Allah! Save me from them by any means that You wish." So, the mountain shook and they all fell down and the boy came back walking to the king. The king said, "What did your companions (the people I sent with you) do?" The boy said, "Allah ﷻ saved me from them." So, the king ordered some people to take the boy on a boat to the middle of the sea, saying, "If he renounces his religion (well and good), but if he refuses, drown him." So, they took him out to sea and he said, "O Allah! Save me from them by any means that you wish. So they were all drowned in the sea.

Then the boy returned to the king and the king said, "What did your companions do?" The boy replied, "Allah ﷻ, saved me from them." Then he said to the king, "You will not be able to kill me until you do as I order you. And if you do as I order you, you will be able to kill me." The king asked, "And what is that?" The boy said, "Gather the people in one elevated place and tie me to the trunk of a tree; then take an arrow from my quiver and say: 'In the Name of Allah ﷻ, the Lord of the boy. If you do this, you will be able to kill me.'" So he did this, and placing an arrow in the bow, he shot it, saying, "In the Name of Allah ﷻ, the Lord of the boy." The arrow hit the boy in the temple, and the boy placed his hand over the arrow wound and died. The people proclaimed, "We believe in the Lord of the boy!" Then it was said to the king, "Do you see what has happened that which you feared has taken place. By Allah ﷻ, all the people have believed (in the Lord of the boy)." So he ordered that ditches be dug at the entrances to the roads and it was done, and fires were kindled in them. Then the king said, "Whoever abandons his religion, let him go, and whoever does not, throw him into the fire." They were struggling and scuffling in the fire, until a woman and her baby whom she was breast feeding came and it was as if she was being somewhat hesitant of falling into the fire, so her baby said to her, "Be patient mother! For verily, you are following the truth!"

Muslim also recorded this Hadith at the end of the *Sahih*. Muhammad Ibn Ishaq Ibn Yasar related this story in his book of *Sirah* in another way that has some differences from that which has just been related. Then, after Ibn Ishaq explained that the people of Najran began following the religion of the boy after his murder, which was the religion of Christianity, he said, "Then (the king) Dhu Nuwas came to them with his army and called them to Judaism. He gave them a choice to either accept Judaism or be killed, so they chose death. Thus, he had a ditch dug and burned (some of them) in the fire (in the ditch); while others he killed with the sword. He made an example of them (by slaughtering them) until he had killed almost twenty thousand of them. It was about Dhu Nuwas and his army that Allah ﷻ revealed to His Messenger:

﴿قُتِلَ أَصْحَابُ الْأُخْدُودِ ۖ النَّارِ ذَاتِ الْوَقُودِ ۖ إِذْ هُمْ عَلَيْهَا قُعُودٌ

ۖ وَهُمْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَفْعَلُونَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ شُعُودٌ ۖ وَمَا نَقَمُوا مِنْهُمْ إِلَّا

أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ ۖ الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ

وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ ۝﴾

«Cursed were the People of the Ditch, of fire fed with fuel. When they sat by it, and they witnessed what they were doing against the believers. And they had no fault except that they believed in Allah, the Almighty, Worthy of all praise! To Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth! And Allah is Witness over everything.» (*Al-Buruj:4-9*)” (Muslim: 7436)

Do you notice how firm the boy was despite his young age? A young woman took off her Hijab as soon as she saw her peers without Hijab playing in the beach.

A person would give the following feeble excuse: “I used to preach in the past, but I gave it all up because my friends started to ridicule me.”

Another would say: “I was not religious in my childhood. It is difficult now with work, children and the like.

What a shame! A young boy teaches us how to be firm.

By the way, you will notice that the boy is better than the monk. The monk is firm, but silent. In contrast, the boy is firm, yet active in serving this religion.

Do you know why the Prophet ﷺ was telling us this story? It is as if he were telling you, “This will never happen to you.

Make Islam a precious possession in your heart. Islam requires the effort of each one of us.

Here came the golden opportunity for the boy to start preaching. Observe how sincere and truthful he was.

What an expert boy in firmness!

I still insist that this will never happen to you, for we live in peace. However, the lesson to learn is to stand fast on defending our religion and inviting people to Islam.

People are fine, but there is a cloud of slight darkness that overshadows the hearts, and we must try to disperse it so that our hearts shine!

We want to reach the point where everyone says: “Islam is my responsibility and I will never abandon the mission.”

As the story of the boy shows, the boy could have saved himself from death twice. However for him, his objective was more valuable than his life; his religion was more important than his life. The result was astonishing: people embraced Islam.

The Companions' Steadfastness

Remember that your steadfastness towards the truth produces goodness both in this life and the Hereafter...And Allah ﷻ may open up one's breast to Islam—even though he

is a disobedient Muslim- if He ﷺ sees that such a person is steadfast towards the truth.

Said Ibn Amir ؓ was one of thousands who left for the region of Tanim on the outskirts of Makka at the invitation of the Quraysh leaders to witness the killing of Khubayb Ibn Adiy ؓ, one of the companions of Muhammad ﷺ whom they had captured treacherously.

With his exuberant youthfulness and strength, Said ؓ jostled through the crowd until he caught up with the Quraysh leaders, men like Abu Sufyan Ibn Harb and Safwan Ibn Umayyah, who were leading the procession.

Now he could see the prisoner of the Quraysh shackled in his chains, the women and children pushing him to the place set for his death. Khubayb's ؓ death was to be in revenge for Quraysh losses at the *Battle of Badr*.

When the assembled throng arrived with its prisoner at the appointed place, Said Ibn Amir ؓ took up his position at a point directly overlooking Khubayb ؓ as he approached the wooden cross. From there he heard Khubayb's ؓ firm but quiet voice amid the shouting of women and children.

"If you would, leave me to pray two rakaat before my death." This the Quraysh allowed.

Said ؓ looked at Khubayb ؓ as he faced the Kaaba and prayed. How beautiful and how composed those two rakaat

seemed! Then he saw Khubayb ؓ facing the Quraysh leaders.

"By God, if you thought that I asked to pray out of fear of death, I would think the prayer not worth the trouble," he said.

Said ؓ then saw his people set about dismembering Khubayb's ؓ body while he was yet alive and taunting him in the process.

"Would you like Muhammad ﷺ to be in your place while you go free?"

With his blood flowing, he replied. "By God, I would not want to be safe and secure among my family while even a thorn hurts Muhammad ﷺ." People shook their fists in the air and the shouting increased. "Kill him. Kill him!"

Said ؓ watched Khubayb ؓ lifting his eyes to the heavens above the wooden cross. "Count them all, O Lord," he said. "Destroy them and let not a single one escape." (Abu Daud at-Tayalisi:1/338 and At-Tabarani in *al-Mu'jam al-Kabir*:5/216)

Upon hearing his supplication, the crowds were worried and fearful that a disaster might happen. Look how weak they were. Khubayb ؓ, in contrast, remained steadfast because of his strong faith and firmness.

The Quraysh returned to Makka and in the eventful days that followed forgot Khubayb ؓ and his death. But Khubayb ؓ

was never absent from the thoughts of Said ﷺ, now approaching manhood. Said ﷺ would see him in his dreams while asleep and he would picture Khubayb in front of him praying his two rakaat calm and contented, before the wooden cross. And he would hear the reverberation of Khubayb's ﷺ voice as he prayed for the punishment of the Quraysh. He would become afraid that a thunderbolt from the sky or some calamity would strike him.

Khubayb ﷺ, by his death, had taught Said ﷺ what he did not realize before -that real life was faith and conviction and struggle in the path of faith, even until death. He taught him also that faith which is deeply ingrained in a person works wonders and performs miracles. He taught him something else too, that the man who is loved by his companions with such a love as Khubayb's ﷺ could only be a prophet with Divine support.

A woman's Steadfastness (the case of the maid of Pharaoh's daughter)

It is mentioned in the book *Raudatu As-Safa* that Pharaoh's daughter had a maid who was under her command and who used to comb her hair. She had believed in Mosses ﷺ. However, she did not expose her *Iman* (faith) out of fear for Pharaoh.

Once while she was combing the hair of Pharaoh's daughter, the comb fell from her hand. When she bent down to pick it up, she recited *Bismillah*. The daughter asked her: "What was it you recited just now? Whose name is that?" She replied: "it is the name of the one who created your father and also gave him a kingdom." She became astonished and remarked: "Is there anyone greater than my father!" Saying this, she ran out to her father, and related the entire incident him.

Pharaoh became extremely angry, called for the maid, and threatened her. However, she unhesitatingly said: "Do whatever you wish, I will not abandon my faith."

Nails were fastened to her hands and feet and thereafter hot ash and embers were placed on her. When this had no effect on her, a child who was in her lap was taken and thrown into the fire. While the child was in the fire, it said: "Mother! Be patient and don't ever leave your faith." She remained steadfast on her faith until she was also thrown into that fire.

The Prophet ﷺ said about the new-born baby: "He is among those new-born who spoke in the cradle, like Jesus ﷺ. In fact, the baby said, 'O mother! Remain steadfast, for you are on the truth.'"

The Prophet ﷺ also said about this story: "On the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ night journey, the Prophet ﷺ smelled a very nice odor. He asked Jibril ﷺ about this pleasant scent and Jibril ﷺ informed him this good smell was coming from the

grave of the woman whose duty used to be to comb the hair of Pharaoh's daughter. This woman was a good, pious believer. (Ibn Majja:4030) The nice smell has been around for thousands of years.

Do you know the most significant verse in the Qur'an? It is in verse *Hud* (The Qur'an:11):

﴿فَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ وَمَنْ تَابَ مَعَكَ﴾

«Therefore, stand firm (in the straight Path) as you are commanded; you and those who with you turn to Allah.»
(*Hud*:112)

The Prophet ﷺ admitted its significance when he was asked about the signs of old age beginning to show on him: "*Surat Hud and similar surat have made me old*". (Tirmidhi:3297)

The verse implies that you should remain steadfast until death.

How to Remain Steadfast

We have seen in the previous chapter real examples of steadfastness in all its aspects: worshipping, obedience, principles, and so on and so forth. Of course, we will never reach that status of being like the companion, the woman or the apprentice. However, you and I can follow certain practical steps in order to remain steadfast. Before listing these steps, let me cite some examples from the Qur'an which show the factors behind one's shakable steadfastness.

Worshipping Allah ﷻ on a verge

A young man starts worshipping Allah ﷻ and feels enthusiastic about preaching. Few days later, a minor incident makes him cool down and get away from religion. Sometimes a person stops worshipping Allah ﷻ simply because he has been wronged by a religious person. Sometimes, one simply stops worshipping Allah ﷻ because his expensive shoes have been stolen from the mosque.

This is wrong. Never give up your religion because of people's actions. One person or even a group of people will never represent this magnificent religion. Ali عليه السلام once said: "I measure men by the truth, but I don't measure the truth by men." It means that you should measure a man's conduct according to the principles of truth and religion, rather than measure the truth and religion according to man's conduct. In other words, it is religion which determines people's behavior, whether bad or good.

Allah ﷻ addresses those who steer away from religion, saying:

﴿وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ حَرْفٍ فَإِنْ أَصَابَهُ خَيْرٌ اطْمَأَنَّ بِهِ وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ فَتْنَةٌ اِنْقَلَبَ عَلَىٰ وَجْهِهِ خَسِرَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةَ ذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ﴾

«There are among men some who serve Allah, as it were, on the verge: if good befalls them, they are, therewith, well content; but if a trial comes to them, they turn on their faces. They lose both this world and the Hereafter. That is loss for all to see.» (Al-Hajj:11)

You not only a loser in this life, but also in the Hereafter. So, do not succumb to loss simply because of a religious

person's misbehavior or stance towards a particular issue. We are not infallible.

If Allah ﷻ bestows upon us of His Bounty...

Some men turn to Allah ﷻ simply because they need something from Allah ﷻ. For instance, they start praying before an exam or before getting married. Once they get what they want, they return to their old days. Allah ﷻ is well-aware of their game:

﴿وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ عَاهَدَ اللَّهَ لَإِذَا آتَيْنَاهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ لَنَصَّدَّقَنَّ وَلَنَكُونُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ﴾ ٧٥ فَلَمَّا آتَاهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ بَخِلُوا بِهِ وَتَوَلَّوْا وَهُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ٧٦ فَأَعْقَبَهُمْ نِفَاقًا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ يَلْقَوْنَهُ بِمَا

أَخْلَفُوا اللَّهَ مَا وَعَدُوهُ وَبِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ﴾

«Amongst them are men who made a Covenant with Allah, that if He bestowed on them of His bounty, they would give (largely) in charity, and be truly amongst those who are righteous. But when He did bestow of His bounty, they became covetous, and turned back (from their covenant), averse (from its fulfilment). So He hath put as a consequence hypocrisy into their hearts, (to last)

till the Day, whereon they shall meet him, because they broke their Covenant with Allah, and because they lied (again and again).» (Tawba:75-77)

Never get into this habit. Never promise Allah ﷻ and then break your promise.

I believe in Allah ﷻ, but...

A man turns to Allah ﷻ and starts preaching within his community. He may, as a result, be ridiculed and even harmed. He should remain steadfast and never give up. Allah ﷻ says:

(وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ ءَامَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ فَإِذَا أُوذِيَ فِي اللّٰهِ جَعَلَ فِتْنَةً
النَّاسِ كَعَذَابِ اللّٰهِ ۖ)

«Then there are among men such as say, "We believe in Allah, but when they suffer affliction in (the cause of) Allah, they treat men's oppression as if it were the wrath of Allah.» (Al-Ankabut:10)

This person has forgotten how much suffering the Prophet ﷺ endured during his mission. Despite all the suffering and hardships, he would say: "O Lord! Forgive my people, for they do not know." (Imam Ahmad, Al-Musnad:1/441)

I no Longer Taste the Sweetness of Faith

Man's religiousness wanes through time and he, as no longer tastes the sweetness of faith. He is no longer active as he used to be. Allah ﷻ says about this type of believers:

«أَلَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَن تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ وَلَا يَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِن قَبْلُ فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَمَدُ فَقَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ ۖ»

(Has not the time arrived for the believers that their hearts in all humility should engage in the remembrance of Allah and of the truth which has been revealed (to them), and that they should not become like those to whom was given revelation aforetime, but long ages passed over them and their hearts grew hard? For many among them are rebellious transgressors.) (Al-Hadid:16)

Upon hearing these verses, the companions felt guilty and began to cry out of fear and shame.

Who are the Mujahidun?

Some people would be actively involved in religious issues, but soon his enthusiasm wears down and no longer endures

the hardships and obstacles involved in being religious.
Allah ﷻ says:

﴿أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُدْخَلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَيَعْلَمَ الصَّابِرِينَ﴾

«Did you think that you would enter heaven without Allah testing those of you who fought hard (in His Cause) and remained steadfast?» (Al-Imran:142)

This is similar to the case of a man who is on his way to Allah ﷻ, but is interrupted by life's necessities, and then becomes dispirited. The verse says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مَا لَكُمْ إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ أَنْفِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَنْتَقَلَبُوا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ أَرْضَيْتُمْ بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا مِنَ الْآخِرَةِ فَمَا مَتَّعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

«O you who believe! What is the matter with you, that, when ye are asked to go forth in the cause of Allah, you cling heavily to the earth? Do you prefer the life of this world to the Hereafter? But little is the comfort of this life, as compared with the Hereafter.» (At-Tawba:38)

To sum up, here is a verse directed to whoever is interrupted in his mission and whosoever faith is diminished:

﴿وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّتِي نَقَضَتْ غَزْلَهَا مِنْ بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ أَنْكُنَّا نَتَخَدُّوتِ أَيْمَنَكُمْ دَخَلًا بَيْنَكُمْ أَنْ تَكُونَ أُمَّةٌ هِيَ أَرْفَى مِنْ أُمَّةٍ إِنَّمَا يَبُلُوكُمْ اللَّهُ بِمَاءٍ وَلَيُبَيِّنَنَّ لَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ مَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ﴾

(And be not like a woman who breaks into untwisted strands the yarn which she has spun, after it has become strong, nor take your oaths to practice deception between yourselves, lest one party should be more numerous than another, for Allah will test you by this; and on the Day of Judgment He will certainly make clear to you (the truth of) that wherein you disagree.) (An-Nahl:92)

Observe this beautiful imagery. Imagine this woman has gone into pains to produce a beautiful garment. When she was very close to finish it, she cut the thread with her hand and ruined everything.

The First Steps toward Steadfastness

I found it difficult to write accurate steps to follow, but here are some which are part and parcel of this religion:

First: Know and understand well your religion, for if you do, your faith will never diminish.

Second: Read the biographies of companions and stories of the Prophets, beginning with the biography of the Prophet ﷺ. For example, read *Fiqh As-Seera* by As-Suyuti. Allah ﷻ says:

﴿وَكَلَّا نَقْصُ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الرُّسُلِ مَا نُثَبِّتُ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ وَجَاءَكَ فِي هَذِهِ الْحَقُّ وَمَوْعِظَةٌ وَذِكْرَى لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾

﴿All that we relate to you of the stories of the messengers, with it we make firm your heart. In them, there comes to you the truth, as well as an exhortation and a Message of remembrance to those who believe.﴾ (Hud:120)

Third: Increase your invocation of Allah ﷻ, especially the part *Laa Ilaha Illa Allah* (there is no god but Allah ﷻ Alone). The Prophet ﷺ said: "Renew your faith." "How?" his companions wondered. "By saying *Laa Ilaha illa Allah* a lot." (Imam Ahmad, *Al-Musnad*:2/359) This is suitable for those who have completely lost that sweet taste of faith.

Fourth: Be patient and never rush to rip the fruits of your hard work. There is no steadfastness without great patience.

Fifth: Increase your acts of worship, for they illuminate your way, heart and mind.

Sixth: Never pride yourself for being religious. Many people's faith waned because of their conceit. Oblivious to the fact that it was Allah's ﷻ Guidance. Allah ﷻ says:

﴿قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيتُهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ عِنْدِي ۗ أَوَلَمْ يَعْلَم أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَهْلَكَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مَنْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُ قُوَّةً وَأَكْثَرُ جَمْعًا وَلَا يُشْغِلُ عَنْ دُنُوبِهِمُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ﴾

﴿He said: "This has been given to me because of a certain knowledge which I have." Did he not know that Allah had destroyed, before him, (whole) generations, which were superior to him in strength and greater in the amount (of riches) they had collected? But the wicked are not called (immediately) to account for their sins.﴾ (Al-Qasas:78)

All the examples on steadfastness listed above involve religious people or true believers. There are, however, other personalities who were non-Muslims, yet they displayed an unshakeable steadfastness. Take for instance Ghandi. He was not a Muslim, yet he stood firm on his principles. The secret behind this is that, first, if you have a true purpose in life, use all your potentials to surmount any obstacles that may stand in your way. Secondly, have self-respect. Never

underestimate yourself, and always have high hopes and aspirations.

Practical Steps

Here are four practical steps:

Du'a: It is said that *du'a* is the a pillar of worship. Never underestimate the importance of *du'a*. Allah ﷻ says:

﴿وَإِنْ كَادُوا لَيَفْتِنُونَكَ عَنِ الَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ لِتَفْتَرِيَ عَلَيْنَا غَيْرَهُ ۖ وَإِذَا لَا تَخَذُوكَ حَلِيلًا وَلَوْلَا أَنْ ثَبَّتْنَاكَ لَقَدْ كِدْتَ تَرْكَنُ إِلَيْهِمْ شَيْئًا قَلِيلًا﴾

«And their purpose was to tempt you away from that which We had revealed unto you, to substitute in Our Name something quite different; (in that case), behold! They would certainly have made you (their) friend! And had we not given you strength, you would nearly have inclined to them a little.» (Al-Isra:73-74)

You may find this absurd and wonder, "Is this all we need?" Yes, it is what you need, but you have to do it humbly. If you wish to make your faith firm, if you wish to be firm during your last moments, if you wish that your heart stay in contact with Islam, if you wish to repent sincerely every time

you happen to sin, then seek Allah's ﷻ Support and ask Him to make you firm. Allah ﷻ says:

﴿يُثَبِّتُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا بِالْقَوْلِ الثَّابِتِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ وَيُضِلُّ اللَّهُ الظَّالِمِينَ ۚ وَيَفْعَلُ اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ﴾

«Allah will establish in strength those who believe, with the word that stands firm, in this world and in the Hereafter; but Allah will leave, to stray, those who do wrong. Allah does what He wills.» (Ibrahim:27) Seek steadfastness from its provider, Allah ﷻ. The verse says:

﴿إِذْ يُوحِي رَبُّكَ إِلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ أَنِّي مَعَكُمْ فَثَبَّتُوا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا سَأُلْقِي فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الرُّعْبَ فَاصْزُبُوا فَوْقَ الْأَعْنَاقِ وَاصْزُبُوا مِنْهُمْ كُلَّ بَنَانٍ﴾

«Remember Your Lord inspired the angels (with the message): "I am with you. Give firmness to the believers. I will instill terror into the hearts of the unbelievers. Smite you above their necks and smite all their finger-tips off them."» (Al-Anfal:12)

Ali ؓ was quoted as saying: "When the Prophet ﷺ was about to send me on a mission to Yemen, I said to him, 'You are sending me to a people who are older than me to judge amongst them!' The Prophet ﷺ said, 'Allah ﷻ will give you a firm and persuasive oratory and guide your heart.'"¹

Never stop asking for firmness, for you will desperately need it, even in the grave. Whenever the Prophet ﷺ finished burying a companion, he would ask his companions: "Ask Allah ﷻ for forgiveness and firmness on behalf of your deceased brother, for he is being interrogated now." (Abu Daud:3221)

Because firmness is important, the Prophet ﷺ would often say after each prayer: "O Lord! I seek firmness in every matter and will of guidance." (At-Tabarani, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir*:7/7179)

Um Salam was asked about the Prophet's ﷺ common *du'a*, and she said: "O changer of hearts. Make me firm on Your Religion." She went on: "I asked the Prophet ﷺ the reason, and he replied, 'Hearts are held between the Merciful's two fingers; He ﷻ can mould them as He pleases', adding:

¹ Ahmad (1/88), An-Nasai in *al-Khasa'is* (35). Al-Adawi said: Authentic through its different pathways of narration.

﴿رَبَّنَا لَا تُرِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ﴾

("Our Lord!" (they say), "Let not our hearts deviate now after You have guided us, but grant us mercy from Your own Presence, for You are the Grantor of bounties without measure.") (Al-Imran:8)" (Tirmidi:3522)

Um Salama said: "I have never stopped saying this *du'a* since I heard it from the Prophet ﷺ."

Furthermore, another common *du'a* said by the Prophet ﷺ was: "O Guardian of Islam and Muslims! Make me firm until I meet you." (Al-Hindi, *Kanzu Al-Ummal*:3910) Why did the Prophet ﷺ say, '...until I meet you' rather '...until I die'? Because, one still needs firmness while dying and during interrogation by the angels of the grave, *Munkar* and *Nakir*.

Never attribute the ability of standing firm to yourself. You need Allah's ﷻ Support. We humans are weak even when making *du'a*. A good example is what happens every year at Mount Arafat. According to the Muslim tradition, the *du'a* made on this sacred day will be granted by Allah ﷻ, so pilgrims prepare themselves not to forget any *du'a*. However, a look around the Mount during the hours between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. and you will see the signs of tiredness on

people's faces. Why does this happen? Because we are confident that we are capable of making Du'a without Allah's ﷻ Support. This is wrong.

Company of Good People: We usually say, 'tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are.' But in our context, I would say, 'tell me who your friends are and I will tell you whether or not you will stand firm.' One rips a great deal of goodness from a good company. Observe what Allah ﷻ advises His Messenger to do:

﴿وَأَصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ ۖ وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنَاكَ عَنْهُمْ تُرِيدُ زِينَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَن ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرُطًا ۝﴾

«And keep your soul content with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking His Face, and let not your eyes pass beyond them, seeking the pomp and glitter of this life. Do not obey any whose heart We have permitted to neglect the remembrance of us, one who follows his own desires, and whose case has gone beyond all bounds.» (Al-Kahf:28)

Even messengers are advised to have a good company. In contrast, bad company breeds evil. Uqba Ibn Mu'it was the person to cause the Prophet ﷺ harm the most. He was once involved with the Prophet ﷺ in a conversation about Islam and was about to embrace Islam. He went to his companion Abu Jahl and informed him of his intentions. The latter warned him that if he did not go to the Prophet ﷺ and spit on his face, he would no longer be his friend. Uqba agreed and did exactly what Abu Jahl instructed him to do. Uqba preferred his bad friend over Islam and, as a result, lost both his worldly life and the Hereafter. Here is what Allah ﷻ says about this type of people:

﴿وَيَوْمَ يَعْصُ الْأُطَالِمُ عَلَى يَدَيْهِ يَقُولُ يَلَيْتَنِي أَخَذْتُ مَعَ الرَّسُولِ سَبِيلًا ۚ﴾
 ﴿يَوَيْلَ لِي لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أَخَذْ فَلَانًا خَلِيلًا ۚ﴾ لَقَدْ أَضَلَّنِي عَنِ الذِّكْرِ بَعْدَ إِذْ جَاءَنِي ۚ وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِلْإِنْسَانِ خَذُولًا ۝﴾

«The Day that the wrong-doer will bite at his hands, He will say, "Oh! Would that I had taken a (straight) path with the Messenger. "Ah! Woe is me! Would that I had never taken such a one for a friend! "He did lead me astray from the Message (of Allah) after it had come to me! Ah! The evil one is but a traitor to man!"» (Al-Furqan:27-29)

Do not be like those who regret their past actions on the Day of Judgment.

Believe and follow it up with good deeds: Your deeds should be directed toward serving Islam and Muslims. Allah ﷻ says:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِن تَنصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنصُرْكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَكُمْ﴾

﴿O you who believe! If you will aid (the cause of) Allah, He will aid you, and plant your feet firmly.﴾
(Muhammad:7)

Experts claim that the human brain consists of two lobes that deal with thoughts. One lobe consists of morals and convictions; the other lobe consists of identify and the sense of belonging. The latter lobe, though, is where the morals and values are transferred. It means that the morals and convictions must move to where the sense of belonging is. Hence, it is action for the sake of morals and convictions that transfers the latter to the level of belonging and identity. By the same token, the Qur'an often follows faith—which is the sum total of convictions—with action. Hence the verb phrases «who believed...» and «...act» which permeate the Qur'anic text. However in the following verse, action precedes faith because Allah ﷻ wants us to act for the sake of this faith and translate it into reality:

﴿كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ﴾

﴿You are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah.﴾ (Al-Imran:110)

Close contact with the Qur'an: Read, recite and memorise the Qur'an. Read at least one part or half part of it every day. The Prophet ﷺ said: "One can finish reading this Qur'an in one month." So, it is important to finish reading the Qur'an in one month, at least once if one can. By reading the Qur'an often, one will feel reinvigorated. However, it is not reading for the sake of reading. One should practice what he or she reads. The Prophet ﷺ said: "He who does not have some Qur'an in him is like a ruined house."

Try to live with the Qur'an and taste it, and you will feel the meaning of firmness. Make du'a after each time you finish reading the entire Qur'an.

Hope

Are you aware of the danger of despair?

Some people may think that the law of change has nothing to do with hope and that it is only limited to action and change. On the contrary, the laws of change in this universe tell us that during the process of change, there will be dark alleys and hurdles. What will you do then? First of all, you will feel discouraged, dispirited and even weak. You will say to yourself, "my work has gone down the drain", "this *change* I am seeking is just a dream." This is the start of your despair. This is a dangerous phase that you have reached, for despair may even shake the creed of *al-Qada wal-Qadar* (preordainment and destiny). Beware! Despair opens the door of weakness, inaction, then failure.

Despair is our nation's number one killer. Our nation, we must admit, is weak, defeated and the list goes on. Is it because we cannot invent or because we can invent but we don't have the potentials to do it? We are capable of working miracles, but we have fallen into a severe sense of despondency.

The sad news is despair has shattered our will to act in every field. Failure is taking its toll in the roots of this nation, and our trust in Allah's ﷻ Support is waning day after day. Do you now see the danger of despair? Are you convinced now that you should restore your hopes so that change may take place?

There is Light at the End of the Tunnel!

Look at the bright side of life. Restore your trust in Allah's ﷻ Support and Might and I am convinced that your hopes will be restored. Do not just say there is hope and move on. No, say it but instill it in your heart and act. Once you instill hope in your heart, trust in Allah ﷻ will increase, and with it comes a great deal of positive things.

Hope is a powerful driving force which change needs badly. We hope that our dignity is restored. We hope that we live a glorious life. We hope that our situation changes for the better. We hope that Muslims recover their occupied territories, and finally, we hope that the last 100 years of defeat and crises will never repeat themselves.

Our religion is the religion of glad tidings

Literally, *glad tiding* means making a person happy. In the Qur'an, the word occurs more than sixty times. It means the coming of Islam and its dissemination of glad tiding amongst

people, and also the good news on the rewards awaiting the believers and the like. Here are some examples:

﴿وَنَبِّئِ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ هُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرَى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ﴾

«But give glad tidings to those who believe and work righteousness, that their portion is Gardens, beneath which rivers flow.» (Al-Baqara:25)

﴿لَهُمْ الْبَشْرَىٰ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ﴾

«For them are glad tidings, in the life of the present and in the Hereafter.» (Yunus: 64)

﴿فَرِحِينَ بِمَا ءَاتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَتَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُوا بِهِمْ

مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ إِلَّا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ﴾

«They glory in the Grace and the bounty from Allah, and in the fact that Allah suffers not the reward of the faithful to be lost.» (Al-Baqara:170)

﴿وَنَبِّئِ الصَّابِرِينَ﴾

«But give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere.» (Al-Baqara:155)

﴿وَنَبِّئِ الْمُحْسِنِينَ﴾

«And proclaim the good news to all who do right.» (Al-Hajj:37)

﴿وُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ مُّسْفِرَةٌ ۖ ضَاحِكَةٌ مُّسْتَبْشِرَةٌ﴾

«Some faces that Day will be beaming, laughing, rejoicing.» (Abasa:39)

We have Appointed you as a Bringer of Glad Tidings

As you read the Qur'an, you will notice that all the messengers received some glad tidings from Allah ﷻ. And while all of them received the glad tiding of begetting a child, the Prophet ﷺ whose glad tiding was linked to himself (i.e. he was himself the bearer of glad tiding):

For Ibrahim ؑ, it was:

﴿فَبَشِّرْهُ بِغُلَامٍ حَلِيمٍ﴾

«So we gave him the good news of a boy ready to suffer and forbear.» (As-Saffar:101)

For Sara, his wife, the glad tiding was:

﴿وَأَمْرَأَتُهُ قَائِمَةٌ فَضَحِكَتْ فَلَبَّسَهَا بِإِسْحَاقَ وَمِنْ وَرَاءِ إِسْحَاقَ

يَعْقُوبَ﴾

«And his wife was standing (there), and she laughed, but we gave her glad tidings of Isaac, and after him, of Jacob.» (Hud:71)

For Zakaria عليه السلام, the glad tiding was:

﴿يٰزَكَرِيَّا اِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلَامٍ اَسْمُهُ يَحْيٰى﴾

«“O Zakariya! We give you good news of a son: His name shall be Yahya.”» (Maryam:7)

Even when those who found Yusuf عليه السلام in the depth of the well, they shouted:

﴿يُبَشِّرُنَا هٰذَا غُلَامٌ﴾

«(Good news! Here is a (fine) young man!)» (Yusuf:19)

The Prophet ﷺ, by contrast, was the messenger of glad tidings. Jesus عليه السلام informed his people that part of his mission was:

﴿وَمُبَشِّرًا بِرَسُولٍ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِي اَسْمُهُ اَحْمَدُ﴾

«...and giving glad tidings of a Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad.» (As-Saf:6)

Other verses confirm that he was indeed a messenger of glad tiding and warning at the same time:

﴿اِنَّا اَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا﴾

«(Verily, We have sent you in truth as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner.)»

(Al-Baqara:119)

Brothers and sisters! Change yourselves and implant hope in your hearts.

Hope Should be Your Light even in Your Bleakest Hour

As Khadija -the Prophet's ﷺ dearest, support, source of affection, wisdom and care- lie dying, she received glad

tiding from Allah ﷻ. In fact, Gabriel ﷺ descended and informed the Prophet ﷺ: "Give glad tiding to Khadija that she will have a house of straw in Paradise, wherein there will be neither any noise nor any fatigue (trouble)." (Al-Bukhari:3820 and Muslim:6223)

Another example is that of Abdullah Ibn Haram ﷺ. Allah ﷻ spoke to Ibn Haram ﷺ in person after his death. Jabir ﷺ reported: "Soon after the death of my father, the Prophet ﷺ said to me, 'Shall I tell you what Allah ﷻ said to your father?' 'Yes, please Messenger of Allah ﷺ.' 'Allah ﷻ has never spoken to anyone without an intermediary, but He ﷻ spoke to your father without an intermediary and said, 'O My Servant! Ask me anything and I shall grant it to you.' Your father said, 'Revive me so I can fight in Your Cause again.' 'Sorry, I have prescribed that the dead will never come back.' 'So, appoint someone to do it on my behalf.' At this Allah ﷻ revealed:

﴿وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ

يُرْزَقُونَ﴾

﴿Think not of those, who are slain in the way of Allah, as dead. Nay, they are living. With their Lord they have provision.﴾ (Al-Imran:169) (Tirmidi:3010 and Ibn Majja:190)

Hope is your light and beams which you should cling to in your darkest hour.

The Future is Promising!

According to the Arabic dictionary, the word hope (amal) means the occurrence of something good in the future. In the Qur'an, the word amal is associated with matters of belief. What does that mean? Observe the following verse:

﴿وَلَا تَأْيِسُوا مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يَأْيِسُ مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْكَافِرُونَ﴾

﴿...and never give up hope of Allah's soothing mercy. Truly, no one despairs of Allah's soothing mercy, except those who have no faith.﴾ (Yusuf:87)

Why would Allah ﷻ brand those who despair as faithless? It is because they have doubt about the belief that when Allah ﷻ created this universe, He ﷻ created 100 kinds of mercy. He ﷻ is using only one now toward His servants and saves the other 99 types for the Day of Judgment. So, the one who despairs is skeptical about Allah's ﷻ Mercy. Such person has despaired and completely forgotten the verse,

﴿كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ﴾

«Your Lord has prescribed Mercy upon Himself.» (Al-An'am:54)

And the hadith which says: "When Allah ﷻ created human beings, He wrote in His Register which is located now on the Throne: My Mercy precedes My Wrath." (Al-Bukhari:3194 and Muslim:6903) Allah ﷻ is Merciful and His Mercy **«extends to all things.» (Al-A'raf:156)**

If you doubt Allah's Mercy and give up hope, saying this is futile what you are doing, Allah ﷻ will never restore our dignity.

Is the person who despairs a disbeliever (*kafir*)? No, he is not, but he has one of the characteristics of disbelievers. This means that the believers do not possess the character of despair.

Would you tolerate being branded a person who despairs? Of course not. So, avoid falling into despair. Be optimistic and be patient. Never shed tears of fear or despair. Never sit cross-handed and wait for things to happen. Things never come to he who waits.

Keep Going!

You may wonder that since despair is a serious sin, then the entire nation is committing such sin because it's a failure. This is not what I mean. The despair which may be a sin is the lack of motivation which leads to laziness and then to the death of the soul. Furthermore, this is not my point of view;

it is the view of As-Suyuti, Ad-Dahbi and al-Qurtubi. Note what Jacob ﷺ said to his children after he had lost both Yusuf ﷺ and Benyamin for 20 years:

﴿يَبْنَى أَذْهَبُوا فَتَحَسَّسُوا مِنْ يُوسُفَ وَأَخِيهِ وَلَا تَأْيَسُوا مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يَأْيَسُ مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْكَافِرُونَ﴾

«O My sons! Go you and enquire about Yusuf and his brother, and never give up hope of Allah's soothing mercy. Truly, no one despairs of Allah's soothing mercy, except those who have no faith.» (Yusuf:87) What a hope! He never despaired. The despair then is not to act; that is to say, not to look for Yusuf ﷺ.

The Prophet ﷺ said: "If the Hour comes and one of you has a baby palm (*fasila*) in his hand, and he can still plant it before he stands up, let him plant it." (Imam Ahmad, *al-Musnad*:3/183) Do you know what does that mean?

It means, never give up hope even on the Day of Judgment with all its terrors: the unveiling of the sky, the cracking of mountains, the trembling of the earth, and the lighting of the oceans. Despite all these terrors, plant the baby palm on your hand even though you are not going to see the fruits of your work.

So, it is the despair which brings about negligence which is dangerous. Never say, "I am tired; I don't care." But say, instead, "I am tired but I am going to act." "I feel weak, but I am going to act." "It is true I am crying, but I am going to act."

Why? Because Allah ﷻ will ask you on the Day of Judgment if you have been looking at what is happening to the nation without acting. Whatever the causes, you will still be called to task for being inactive. Even if your action is little, you will not have the character of despair.

A Person Embraced Islam out of Hope!

The Prophet ﷺ used to instill hope in everyone he met and at every occasion, especially in hard times. It is as if he was telling us: "I don't like to talk about hope and instill in the hearts except at the peak of hardships...when the nation feels that there is no hope nor the wherewithal for it. It is in those times that the true Muslims emerge."

Ask yourself the following question: "Do I have hope?" A person who is away from Allah ﷻ easily loses hope when despair throws its darkness in the souls. A believer's hope in Allah ﷻ, in contrast, increases as life gets critical and hard because he knows for certain that no one will lift such crisis except Allah ﷻ.

﴿أَرَفَتِ الْأَرْفَةَ ۖ لَيْسَ لَهَا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ كَاشِفَةُ﴾

(The (Judgment) ever approaching draws nigh: No (soul) but Allah can lay it bare.) (An-Najm:57-58)

The story of Uday Ibn Hatim At-Ta'i: Uday, the son of the incredibly well-known generous man, was a wealthy man of noble lineage. He was once invited to the Prophet's ﷺ modest house. There, the Prophet ﷺ sat on the floor, and Uday sat on a leather piece. Within one minute and with just three words, the Prophet ﷺ managed to convince Uday to embrace Islam. The Prophet ﷺ said to him: "O Uday! Embrace Islam and you will be safe...I believe that only the feeling of superiority you feel toward us that is preventing you from embracing Islam." Uday was silent for a moment. In fact, this was the truth. Afterwards, the Prophet ﷺ said: "Have you visited Al-Hira (a kingdom under the Persian rule. At the time, no one ever believed it would be conquered)?" "I haven't, but I know where it is." Uday replied. The Prophet ﷺ proceeded: "O Uday! I swear by Allah ﷻ (look the Prophet ﷺ is using the oath to instill hope in Uday) that women are about to leave al-Hira without company, that they will circumambulate the Kaaba, secure and fearing nobody but Allah ﷻ, and that the treasures of Caesars Ibn Hurmuz will be ours." Uday asked in utter bewilderment: "Caesars Ibn Hurmuz?" The Prophet ﷺ said,

"Indeed, Caesars Ibn Hurmuz, Caesars Ibn Hurmuz, Caesars Ibn Hurmuz. It will be a period of growing prosperity when everyone is rich and alms are unaccepted." Uday said: "Sincerely, I am moved." And later, he declared his conversion.

According to the story, Uday embraced Islam by the hope the Prophet ﷺ instilled in his heart. Uday later confirmed: "I, indeed, saw with my own eyes women leaving al-Hira without company and fearlessly circumambulating the Kaaba. I swear by Allah ﷻ, I was among the first attackers of the treasures of Ibn Hurmuz...I also swear by Allah ﷻ that the third prophecy (treasures of Caesars) will be fulfilled." (the seizure of Caesars' treasures did take place during the rule of Omar Ibn Abdulaziz ؓ) (Imam Ahmad: 4/379)

Do you notice how hope can manipulate the heart and the mind?

A Fugitive with Hopes!

It goes without saying that the blessed *Hijra* was an unprecedented milestone in history. It was a heavenly command which descended to protect the Prophet ﷺ and his companions from the tyranny and prosecution of the Polytheists, who when they learnt about the Prophet's ﷺ fleeing clandestinely from Makka at night, were baffled and

were unable to lay hands on him. In response, they armed special forces to track him in order to find out the way he had taken. At the same time, Quraysh put up 100 she-camels reward to anyone who could pursue and apprehend the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his companion.

Suraqa Ibn Malik, an expert horseman, scoured the country side in search of the Prophet ﷺ and Abu Bakr ؓ. It was reported to him that four men had been seen moving to the west along the sea shore. Suraqa ؓ felt convinced that these four men must be the Prophet ﷺ and his party. He pursued the party. After some fast riding he came to within seeing distance. He felt happy that these were the men he was in search of. At this stage his horse stumbled and he fell on the ground. He resorted to divination through arrows, and the oracle did not favour his advance. Ignoring the oracle he remounted the horse and galloped fast until he came within talking distance of the Prophet ﷺ and his party. Seeing Suraqa ؓ, Abu Bakr ؓ felt uneasy. The Prophet ﷺ counseled him not to worry, for Allah ﷻ was with them. At this stage the horse of Suraqa ؓ stumbled again. He resorted to divination, and once again the verdict was unfavourable. Suraqa ؓ now felt that some supernatural power protected the Prophet ﷺ and his party and it would be futile to contend against supernatural powers. He remounted the horse and galloped again. When he came close to the party, he shouted that he was not coming as a pursuer; he was coming as a friend. He said that he wanted that a certificate of immunity

should be granted to him. Suraqa ؓ approached the party and the Prophet ﷺ asked Abu Bakr ؓ to write for Suraqa ؓ a document of immunity. With this document, Suraqa ؓ returned to Makka. In the way he met some other persons who were in pursuit of the Prophet ﷺ and his party. He made them turn back saying that the party had not gone that way. Suraqa ؓ presented this document at the time of the conquest of Makka, and he was duly rewarded. He was also converted to Islam, and he regarded this conversion as the greatest reward.¹

Suraqa ؓ reported: "When the Prophet ﷺ conquered Makka shortly after his return from Hunayn and Taif, I went out to meet him with the certificate of immunity. I met him at al-Jaarana, and I sneaked in with the Ansar men. They recognised me and started hitting me with their spears until I reached the Prophet ﷺ and showed him the certificate of immunity. The Prophet ﷺ said: "The day of loyalty and goodness, come closer." I did and then declared my conversion. I asked him: "Some lost cattle joined my cattle, do I have a reward if I give them to drink?" The Prophet ﷺ said, "Yes." I returned to my people and brought my *sadaqa* to the Prophet ﷺ.

¹ Al-Bukhari, *The Book of the Merits of the Companions*, Chapter: The Prophet's ﷺ hijra with his companions to Madina (7/Hadith No.3906/Fath).

Suraqa ؓ grieved very much over the demise of the Prophet ﷺ, recalling the day when he chased the Prophet ﷺ tracking his footsteps in exchange for 100 she-camels.

As time elapsed, Omar ؓ became the Amir of the believers and his army continued to annihilate the thrones of disbelief and seize the booty of the Persians and the Romans. Saad Ibn Abu Waqqas's messengers came to Omar ؓ with the good news of victory and with them one fifth of the booty seized by the conquerors in the Cause of Allah ﷻ. As Omar ؓ began examining the booty, he saw Kisra's crown adorned with diamonds, and golden threads, and his two bangles which the Prophet ﷺ -if you recall- had promised Suraqa ؓ to wear.

Hope, promises and rewards kept Suraqa going forward to acquire material gains which ended up in earning the highest reward of all; embracing Islam. I am not asking you to be like Suraqa, an expert in horse riding, but have hopes to reach your goals however challenging they may be.

Despite the Siege

At the battle of the Ditch (*Al-Khandaq*), the Quraysh polytheists besieged Madina with a force totalling 10,000 fighters who came to kill the Prophet ﷺ. The siege they had been placed under had dragged on. The Muslims were undergoing severe hardship and difficulties. They had expended practically all their effort and were utterly

exhausted. So intense was the strain that some even began to despair.

Jabir ؓ reported: "We were digging (the trench) on the day of (*Al-Khandaq* (i.e. Trench)) and we came across a big solid rock. We went to the Prophet ﷺ and said, "Here is a rock appearing across the trench." He said, "I am coming down." Then he got up, and a stone was tied to his belly for we had not eaten anything for three days. So the Prophet ﷺ took the spade and struck the big solid rock, shouting, 'Allah ﷻ is Great! Rome is conquered (*hope at critical moments*)'. The companions, bewildered, looked at each other and said, "Rome is conquered and we stand here horrified." The Prophet ﷺ struck the big solid rock a second time, shouting, 'Allah ﷻ is Great! Persia is conquered.' Then, he struck it a third time, and it became like sand."

Brothers and sisters, have hopes. Raise your morale and be positive. Guide people and wait for the glad tidings.

May be, perhaps...Glimpses of Hope!

The Prophet ﷺ returned from Taif, injured, humiliated, rejected and dejected. Nobody wanted to listen to his preaching and nobody was embracing the new religion. At this moment, the angel of mountains descended and asked him: "If you wish, I can cause *al-Akhshabayn* (two mountains in Makka) to collapse on those who have hurt and distressed you." Bleeding and tired, the Prophet ﷺ replied,

"No...may be their offspring will worship Allah ﷻ." (*Al-Bukhari: 3231 and Muslim: 4629*)

Another instance of hope is when the Prophet ﷺ comforted Zayd ؓ with the following words which are full of hopes: "O Zayd! Allah ﷻ is surely making a way out for us."

Dreaming is the Beginning of Hope!

Let's challenge the notion of daydreaming (far from reality), and start imagining positive things happening to you. This is not absurd; Salahuddine had a dream and his dream came through.

Let's imagine ourselves entering The Farthest Mosque (*Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa*), triumphant and chanting the words 'Allah is Great.' I am trying to boost your morale and give you hope as did the Prophet ﷺ at the *Battle of the Ditch* (*Al-Khandaq*) when he ﷺ struck the big solid rock, shouting, 'Allah ﷻ is Great! Persia is conquered. Keep going. How do you feel now? Aren't you saying to yourself now, 'I praise Allah ﷻ for making me among the conquerors?'" Isn't it a great honour? Keep imagining. Don't you see yourself now entering from one of the gates? Which one; the gates are so many? "Ah! My friends and I agreed to enter from the Gate of Hitta." But, why this gate in particular? Because it is the gate Moses ؑ commanded the Children of Israel to enter:

﴿وَادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَقُولُوا حِطَّةً﴾

«But enter the gate with humility and say, 'hitta' (i.e. wipe out our sins).» (Al-Baqara:58)

They never did. Promise Allah ﷻ that you, unlike the disobedient Israelis, will do it and that you will obey the command. Keep going. Who is in your company? Or, who do you choose to be your company? As you are entering now, can't you hear the uproar of voices chanting, *Allah is Great*? Can you hear the voice that shouts:

﴿وَقُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ إِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوقًا﴾

«And say: "Truth has (now) arrived, and falsehood perished, for falsehood is (by its nature) bound to perish."» (Al-Isra:81)?

Can you see the Green Stone? Can you see the olive trees? Can you see your Palestinian brothers giving you a warm welcome?

Imagine yourself holding the hand of your Iraqi brother on the right, and your Kuwaiti brother on the left, all hand-in-hand like an avalanche, and then entering Al-Quds.

Can you hear the merriments? Can you see Omar's ﷺ place where he once stood and asked Bilal ﷺ to announce the Azan?

Aren't you happy now that Allah ﷻ has chosen you to be among the supporters of Salahuddine, Omar Ibn Al-Khattab and Ubayda Ibn Al-Jarrah?

Can you hear people reciting Surat Al-Fath? Can you see their tears? Can you see prostrating to Allah ﷻ and the high value of its beauty? All people wish to prostrate where the Prophet ﷺ did. Everyone now is looking at the pulpit of Salahuddine, and reminiscing the old days of pioneering conquerors.

Imagine yourself kissing the hand of a Palestinian bereaved mother and comforting her with the words, "I am your son now; I have come to replace your martyred son" or "Do you allow me to rebuild your ruined house?"

Can you see our prosperity? Can you see Al-Quds train passing through the Muslim land and picking people from the different Muslim cities? These people are coming to meet you in al-Quds and to pray in al-Quds.

What a dream! Don't say to me, 'wake up; it is only a dream.' This dream will become a reality:

﴿وَلْيَدْخُلُوا الْمَسْجِدَ كَمَا دَخَلُوهُ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَلِيُتَبَرَّأُوا مَا عَلَوُا تَتْبِيرًا﴾



«...and to enter your temple as they had entered it before, and to visit with destruction all that fell into their power.» (Al-Isra:7)

Here are some steps to follow in order for our dream to become reality: first of all have hopes and be optimistic. Secondly, stop cheating and make sure that your passing the exam is well-deserved. Thirdly, be positive and have dignity. Fourthly, treat your parents with kindness. Fifthly, increase your productivity, whether as a student or as a worker. Sixthly, do not sleep for long hours. I am sure that if you follow these steps, all our dreams will come through.

What About the Dream to Change?

Here is the evidence which tells that change will surely take place:

Part of Allah's ﷻ laws in this universe is that things do not stay as they are:

﴿وَتِلْكَ الْأَيَّامُ نُدَاوِلُهَا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ﴾

«Such days (of varying fortunes) We give to men and men by turns.» (Al-Imran:140)

Leadership of the world remained for a very long time in the East. Read the history of the Prophets and Messengers.

Ibrahim ﷺ, Lut ﷺ, Yunus ﷺ, Jesus ﷺ, and Moses ﷺ were in that part of the globe (the East). Next, it moved to the West when the Greeks and Romans gained control. Then, with the coming of the Prophet ﷺ, it (leadership) went back to the East and remained there for 1300 years. It is now in the West, but we shall retrieve it soon if we work hard for it and achieve the change Allah ﷻ promises us in the Qur'an:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ﴾

«Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves.» (Ar-Ra'd:11)

We are an imperishable nation because we shall be witness over other nations. Put differently, our death is the establishment of the hour (Qiyam As-Sa'a). Our nation may weaken, but we should stand up again. Unlike the Pharaohs or the Persians, this nation should stay because it carries the last message from Allah ﷻ to people in this earth (the Qur'an):

﴿إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ﴾

«We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and we will assuredly guard it (from corruption).» (Al-Hijr:9)

If our nation perishes, who will defend *Tawhid*? Who will make sure Allah's ﷻ Law (*Shari'a*) is implemented? Nobody will.

Ours is not a total downfall; it is simply a decline. To put it metaphorically, what is happening to us is not a total eclipse; it is just a momentary disappearance of the sun. At this time, birds took to their nests, but do not SLEEP. They remained awake until the sun re-shines, for they know by nature that it is not sunset. So, the last century was an eclipse, and the nation has not perished. It is still waiting, like the birds, for the little sunshine light. This is metaphorical. But what is this little sunshine in real life? It is the youth who is becoming religious these days!

Evidence in the Qur'an that we shall be victorious can hardly be overlooked:

﴿إِنَّا لَنَنْصُرُ رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ يَقُومُ
الْأَشْهُدُ﴾

«We will, without doubt, help Our apostles and those who believe, (both) in this world's life and on the Day when the witnesses will stand forth.» (*Ghafir:15*)

﴿كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَأَغْلِبَنَّ أَنَا وَرُسُلِي إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ﴾

«Allah has decreed: "It is I and My apostles who must prevail". Allah is one full of strength, able to enforce His will.» (*Al-Mujadila:21*)

﴿وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي
الْأَرْضِ﴾

«Allah has promised, to those among you who believe and work righteous deeds, that He will, of a surety, grant them in the land, inheritance (of power).» (*An-Nur:55*)

The Prophet ﷺ said: "Verily, Allah has folded the earth (i.e. has drawn together the ends of the entire earth) for me, and I saw its eastern and western parts, and verily the dominion of my nation will reach as far as what has been folded to me from it, and I have been granted the two treasures: the red (the gold i.e., the treasures of *kisra*) and the white (the silver, i.e. the treasures of *Caesar*)...." (*Muslim:7187* and *Tirmidi:2176*)

The Prophet ﷺ was asked which city would be conquered first, Constantinople (now Istanbul) or Roma, and he replied: 'Constantinople.' In fact, Muhammad Al-Fatih conquered it 600 years later. He ﷺ added, 'Then Roma.'

The Prophet said: "The Hour will not be established until you fight with the Jews, and the stone behind which a Jew will be hiding will say: 'O Muslim! There is a Jew hiding behind me, so kill him.'" (Muslim:7268). This religion, however regressive it may become, regains its strength. Remember the years of grief following the demise of Ali ؑ and the period of stagnation. But these were soon superseded by *al-Hijra* (emigration) and the establishment of the Islamic state and Islamic world. During the rule of Abu Bakr ؓ, the Islamic state experienced the wars of apostasy (*hurub ar-rida*) which were soon followed by the conquest of Persia and Rome.

Many youth are now turning to Allah ﷻ, and this is very good news.

Women are becoming more religious than ever. This is also good news because we will rest assured that they will produce educated and religious generations.

The overthrowing of man-made political systems because they failed to fulfil their hollow promises. Islam is the only system which can make man happy.

Finally, always remember that the darkest moments of the night precede the dawn of a new, fresh day. Victory, with Allah's ﷻ Leave, is inevitable forthcoming.

The Value of Knowledge

The Chasm between us and Advanced Science is so Huge!

The most significant problem our nation faces today is the lack of knowledge. We are a nation that is more concerned with food and drink than with scientific research and excellence. We are not at all executing what Allah ﷻ commands us:

﴿وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ﴾

«Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power.» (Al-Anfal:60)

Here are some facts which we ignore: The rate of illiteracy in the Arab world is in the region of 60%. Of 300 million Arabs, 180 million do not read or write. This is a disaster and also a shame, given the first heavenly command was: ﴿Read!﴾ (Al-Alaq:1) and a number of verses which indicate that people with knowledge are better than those without it:

﴿قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولَٰئِكَ﴾
 ﴿الْأَنْبِيَاءُ﴾

(Say: "Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know? It is those who are endowed with understanding that receive admonition.) (Az-Zumar:9)

Surprisingly and ironically at the same time, Canada has recently declared its intention to abolish illiteracy not in reading or writing but in computers. Do you see the gap between us and the developed world?

Our young intellectuals are somehow excluded from the Nobel Prize Award which has existed since 1901. Take for instance the fields of medicine, physics and chemistry. It has been a long time since Muslim scholars in these fields received the Nobel Prize. While 81 American scholars received the Nobel Prize in medicine and 45 in physics, only two Muslims received it: a Pakistani scholar and Dr. Ahmad Zawil. In other parts of the world such Britain, 26 scholars received in medicine, 20 in chemistry and 25 in physics.

Imagine all the recipients were Muslims. Would our situation be like it is now? Do you recall our jubilation and pride when Ahmad Zawil received the Nobel Prize?

Seeking Knowledge is an Obligation

We are absent, if not, nonexistent in the scientific research circles. We have been importing inventions of the last 200 years, ranging from electricity, aeroplanes, computers and mobile phones to pencils, while, ironically, the following verse *exclusively* descended on us:

(أَفَرَأَىٰ وَرَيْكَ الْكَرُمِ ﴿١﴾ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ﴿٢﴾ عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ

يَعْلَمُ ﴿٣﴾)

﴿Read! And Your Lord is Most Bountiful, He who taught (the use of) the pen, taught man that which he knew not.﴾
(*Al-Alaq:3-5*)

In fact, we are absent from the scientific research map and production. Even the rags for praying and *Tasbeih*, we import them. Take India for example. It is a developing country, yet it is the biggest exporter of computer software in the world. Its exports increased from 6 million dollars in 2000 to 8 million dollars in 2002.

By the way, developing computer software does not require large plants. It just requires a computer, a table, and a thinking mind. The German Chancellor announced at a Computer Fair that would issue 30 work visas for Indian nationals. Germany needs this labour force because its

ambitions in computer programming far exceed its potentials.

It is heartbreaking to see a nation like ours, after 1300 years of preaching, last in the scientific and technical race...Science and scientists impose themselves, but why have we reached this pitiful stage?

Knowledge for Knowledge's Sake!

We have neglected our duty of acquiring knowledge imposed on us by Allah ﷻ. Why? Here are the causes:

We no longer respect knowledge, and knowledge no longer has value in our lives. We are content importing it. Can't we emulate our ancestors who had respect for both knowledge and learned men. Harun Ar-Rachid had a scholar as his guest over dinner, and when the latter finished eating, Harun Ar-Rachid, the Muslim Caliphate at the time, offered the scholar water to wash his hands (i.e. he himself poured water on the scholar's hands to wash) out of reverence for him.

Knowledge in our country has become a simple certificate rather than something that would benefit the nation. A Japanese student went to America to study for his PhD. During the course of his studies, he learned how to invent a machine. So, he stopped studying, cancelled his scholarship and went back home. When asked about the PhD degree, he

said that he went abroad to learn how to invent this machine. When he learnt how, the degree for him was nothing. What was important for him was to serve his country.

Nobody wants to study. In fact, we are confused which field to pursue and there is a lack of career advising. Sometimes, students enrol in a course, and then after two or three years of study, they withdrew because they did not like it or because such branch has no future.

Young people have misconceptions about Islam. For instance, they think that Islam is spending so much time in the mosque. They do and, as a result, their academic performance is affected. This gives the wrong about the image Islam and Muslims. There are in our religion individual duties (*fard Ayn*) and collective duties (*fard kifaya*). If, for instance, the Muslims are not participants in an invention, then it become incumbent upon each individual Muslim to take part. However, if one Muslim participates in the invention, then it is no longer compulsory for the others.

Why do people enrol and opt for courses in Shari'a branch and avoid scientific courses such as medicine, physics and the like? Isn't it enough for you to just learn what will benefit you in correctly performing your acts of worship?

We are a non-reading nation despite the fact that reading now has become easy and accessible with the advance of technology. There is now what is known as *e-books* made available in as small as the palm of your hand. However, we

are good at solving crossword puzzles, Sudoku, chess online and cheating in exams and in everything.

We Acquire Knowledge, but we Hoard it!

Sometimes we study a subject without understanding it and without knowing its benefit to the nation. How many languages do we speak? How much computer knowledge do we have?

When the Arabs were the leaders of the world, the Europeans were forced to learn Arabic. By the same token, since we are at the bottom of the list of scientific advance and research, isn't it wise to learn their language?

More important, opting for a specialty for lucrative ends is not at all a Muslim value nor is depriving others of knowledge to keep competition at bay. The Prophet ﷺ said: "Whoever is asked about something he knows and refuses to share it will be bridled with fire on the Day of Judgment." (Ibn Majja:264)

No one is concerned nowadays with spending money and time toward scientific research. If financially capable, one would spend a fortune in performing pilgrimage, but would not spend a penny on research.

It is a great loss for us and for the Islamic nation...

You Pin the Blame on Islam, here is what it says!

The uniformed will probably say that our backwardness is probably due to a defect in Islam which caused its followers to be like this, and that scientific excellence occurs outside the Islamic nation. Remember that the first heavenly command was «Read!». But, why was it addressed to the Prophet ﷺ, an illiterate man? It was because the end of miracles was at the emergence of Islam. Previous prophets and messengers were triumphant with the miracles they performed: Moses ﷺ with his stick, Nuh ﷺ with the rescue from flood, and so on and so forth. Muhammad ﷺ and his nation's triumph, by contrast, stemmed from the Muslim individuals. The second revealed chapter of the Qur'an was:

﴿ن وَالْقَلَمِ وَمَا يَسْطُرُونَ﴾

«Nun. By the Pen and the (record) which (men) write.»
(*Al-Qaalam*:1)

Some facts from the Qur'an and Hadith:

On the creation of Adam ﷺ, Allah ﷻ says:

﴿وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا﴾

«(And He taught Adam the nature of all things.)» (*Al-Baqara*:31)

The word *Alim* occurs 224 times in the Qur'an.

The word *Ilm* (knowledge) occurs 375 in the Qur'an.

The Prophet ﷺ places the knowledge seeker in a high rank: "He who follows a path in quest of knowledge, Allah will make the path of Paradise easy for him. The angles lower their wings over the seeker of knowledge, being pleased with what he does. The inhabitants of the Heavens and the earth, and even the fish in the depth of the oceans seek forgiveness for him. The superiority of a scholar over a devout worshipper is like that of the full moon over the rest of the stars (in brightness). Scholars are the heirs of the Prophets who bequeath neither gold nor silver, but only knowledge; and he who acquires it (knowledge), has in fact acquired an abundant portion" (Tirmidi and Abu Daud)

Don't You Want to be That Person Respected by Angels?

The scholar is the person who acquires both aspects of knowledge: religious knowledge and knowledge that benefits people.

The Prophet said: "He who sets out on quest for knowledge shall be protected by Allah until he returns." (Tirmidi:2647) It implies that a knowledge seeker's reward is like that of the *mujahid*'s. So, on this basis, Islam is innocent of all the accusations against it for being responsible for the backwardness of Muslims.

The best attribute of the Prophets was knowledge

Observe what Allah ﷻ said to them:

To Moses ﷺ:

﴿آتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا﴾

«We bestowed on him wisdom and knowledge.» (Al-Qasas:14)

To Daud عليه السلام and Sulayman عليه السلام:

﴿وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ عِلْمًا وَقَالَا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي فَضَّلَنَا

عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِّنْ عِبَادِهِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾

«We gave (in the past) knowledge to Daud and Sulyman and they both said: "Praise be to Allah, who has favoured us above many of His servants who believe!"» (An-Naml:15)

They weren't just learned men, but some of them had different occupations. The Prophet ﷺ said: "There was not a messenger that Allah ﷻ sent but that he mastered a skill." Zakaria عليه السلام, for example, was a carpenter.

Observe the Prophet's ﷺ strategy with the prisoners of *Badr* Battle. He ordered that every prisoner should teach 10 Muslims as recompense. Amongst the learners was Zayd Ibn Thabit عليه السلام. As a young boy, Zayd was recommended by his relatives for having a beautiful voice in reading the Qur'an and a sharp mind. The Prophet ﷺ listened to Zayd عليه السلام reciting some surahs he had memorized. His recitation was

clear and beautiful and his stops and pauses indicated clearly that he understood well what he recited. The Prophet ﷺ was pleased. Indeed he found that Zayd's ﷺ ability far exceeded the commendation he had been given by his relatives. The Prophet ﷺ then set him a task which required intelligence, skill and persistence. "Zayd, learn the writing of the Jews for me," instructed the Prophet ﷺ. "At your command, Messenger of Allah," replied Zayd ﷺ who set about learning Hebrew with enthusiasm. He became quite proficient in the language and wrote it for the Prophet ﷺ when he wanted to communicate with the Jews. Zayd ﷺ also read and translated from Hebrew when the Jews wrote to the Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ instructed him to learn Syriac also and this he did. Zayd ﷺ thus came to perform the important function of an interpreter for the Prophet ﷺ in his dealings with non-Arabic speaking peoples.

Where is the backwardness, then? The Prophet ﷺ annihilated the myths which were taking their toll in the minds of Muslims. He ﷺ warned us: "Whoever seeks the service of a clairvoyant and believes in what he/she says, his prayer will not be accepted for forty days." (Imam Ahmad, *Al-Musnad*: 4/68)

Scientific Rise was First Initiated by the Prophet ﷺ!

Computing, for example, was initiated by the Prophet ﷺ when he ordered his companions to do an inventory of people who possessed arms and who embraced Islam:

"Count how many people possess weapons. Count how many people have embraced Islam." He also initiated teamwork: "And help one another in good matters and fear of Allah ﷻ."

Hassan Ibn Thabit ؓ informed the Prophet's ﷺ of his intention to compose a satiric poem that addresses the disbelievers, and the Prophet ﷺ asked him to involve Abu Bakr ؓ who was an expert in the different Arab lineages. He did, and when the Qurayshis read the poem, they swore by their idols *Allat walUzza* that Abu Bakr ؓ had a hand in the poem.

The Prophet ﷺ also discarded or avoided useless knowledge; that is, to say knowledge which won't be beneficial for the nation. Hence, the *du'a*: "*Allahumma inni a'uzu bika min ilmin laa yanfa'* (I seek your refuge from the evil of an unbeneficial knowledge.)" (An-Nsai:5551 and Ibn Majja:250) and Ibn Majja:, "*Allahumma infa'ni bima 'Allamtani wa 'allimni maa yanfa'uni wa zidin ilma.* (O Allah, grant me benefit in what You have taught me, teach me what will benefit me, and increase my knowledge.) (Tirmidi:3599)

We have knowledge but it is in the hands of somebody else, the West which is in a superior position now...

Brothers and sisters! It is high time we acted. Trust me, the West excels because it knows how to manage time. Let us exploit our potentials to the full! Let us manage our time

effectively. Let us excel in sciences such as medicine, physics and chemistry. Let us set up a fund exclusively for scientific research. And remember, Islam and ignorance never coexist.

Steadfastness in the Face of Crisis

Crisis Exposes the Sincere and the Insincere

This is true, and we I have listed several examples above. It is at critical moments when people are confused and disoriented. The strong may turn weak, the firm may give up and the proud with his religion may hand over leadership to others whom he thinks are more skilled and experts that he is. The hopeful and optimistic who clings to that flicker of light may despair. The wise may panic and won't know how to react. I know that these will happen for certain, but why in your opinion? It is because hardship is like a sieve; it sifts people and singles out the truthful and the liar. Hardship is a real test of people's trust in Allah ﷻ, religion and self that he is capable of building and producing. And tests, by nature, reveal one's words and deeds. Allah ﷻ says:

﴿الرَّحْمَنُ أَحْسِبَ النَّاسَ أَنْ يَبْرُكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْقَهُونَ ۖ فَلْيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ هُمْ سَادِقُونَ وَلْيَعْلَمَنَّ الْكَاذِبِينَ﴾

(A.L.M. Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, "We believe", and that they will not be tested? We did test those before them, and Allah will certainly know those who are true from those who are false.) (Al-Ankabut:1-3)

The Qur'an is addressing you troubled, confused and disoriented Muslim person. It informs and guides you. Recite in hardships and you will understand its message.

It is not Yet the End!

Hardships and crises will expose you and will show your true self. After you have turned to Allah ﷻ and become a good Muslim, will you go back to your usual ways after the lifting of the crisis? If you do, then you have failed in the test. You have to know your true self and diagnose the source of your failure. Remember that the most important thing is the Day you stand before Allah ﷻ. Are you going to be pleased with yourself and with your head up, saying to Allah ﷻ: "O Lord! I have remained steadfast throughout and

confident that your ease will come after hardship." Or are you going to say the opposite?

So, how can we remain steadfast in adversity and hardships without being shaken? Always bear in mind that in our Islamic history, hardship always presages an imminent glory, and history repeats itself. Here are four pillars to consider in order to remain steadfast until you meet Allah ﷻ:

Allah ﷻ is the Lord of power

The First Pillar: Everything in this universe belongs to Allah ﷻ. Read these verses carefully.

﴿قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَلِكُ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ إِنَّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ﴾

﴿Say: "O Allah, Lord of power (and Rule), You give power to whom You please, and You strip off power from whom You please, You endue with honour whom You please, and You bring low whom You please. In Your Hand is all good. Verily, over all things You have power.﴾ (Al-Imran:26) Do you notice the degree of power? It is the most significant power in the universe.

﴿تُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَتُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَمَاتِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْمَمَاتِ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَتَرْزُقُ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ﴾

﴿You cause the night to gain on the Day, and You cause the Day to gain on the night; You bring the living out of the dead, and You bring the dead out of the living; and You give sustenance to whom You please, without measure.﴾ (Al-Imran:27)

﴿لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَّةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ﴾

﴿Allah! There is no god but He, the Living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal. No slumber can seize Him or sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth.﴾ (Al-Baqara:255)

﴿وَأَلَّهُ غَالِبٌ عَلَى أَمْرِهِ﴾

﴿And Allah has full power and control over his affairs.﴾ (Yusuf:21) Note the boldfaced words in the verse.

﴿مَنْ أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ﴾

«See you not that Allah does know (all) that is in the heavens and on earth?» (Al-Mujadila:7)

﴿أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ﴾

«See you not that Allah created the heavens and the earth?» (Ibrahim:19)

﴿أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ﴾

«Know you not that Allah knows all that is in heaven and on earth» (Al-Hajj:70)

This earth belongs to Allah ﷻ. In fact, the whole universe belongs to Him. Isn't that sufficient proof to put your trust in Allah ﷻ?

Who was before our creation? Who was before the Muslims and their foes? Who was before the existence of heaven and earth? Who was before the existence of Jinn? Who was before the existence of angels? It was Allah ﷻ Alone. This earth is His, and He ﷻ sees and hears:

﴿إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ أَسْمَعُ وَأَرَى﴾

«(For I am with you: I hear and see (everything).)» (Ta-Ha:46)

It means He ﷻ owns the earth and He is aware of what is going on:

﴿عَلِيمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ﴾

«(He knows that which is secret and open.)» (Al-An'am:73)

﴿إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ﴾

«(Verily, when He intends a thing, His command is, "Be", and it is!)» (Yasin:82)

Renew your trust in Allah ﷻ. Your du'a and efforts will not go down the drain. If your request is not granted or delayed, it may be for a reason which only Allah ﷻ knows. Perhaps we shall laugh in the years to come for our impatience and sadness we endured during the period of hardship. We will probably laugh when we see the good stemming from hardships and crises.

Nothing matters so long as Allah ﷻ is with you!

A Yemeni delegation asked the Prophet ﷺ: "Allah ﷻ was Alone, in the unknown. We are new on earth, which means that the earth was His, and then He ﷻ created us to exist thereon. He ﷻ initiated the creation by breathing His Spirit into Adam ﷺ:

﴿فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ﴾

﴿"When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall you down in obeisance unto him."﴾ (Al-Hijr:29) and He ﷻ will make this universe perish by sounding the trumpet:

﴿وَتُفْجَخُ فِي الصُّورِ فَصَعِقَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ﴾

﴿The trumpet will (just) be sounded, when all that are in the heavens and on earth will swoon.﴾ (Az-Zumar:68)

Afterwards, Allah ﷻ shall call: "Who is the Lord of power today?" There will be no answer, because there will be nobody. Then Allah ﷻ will say: "The Lord of power today is Allah the Subduer."

Ibn Omar ﷺ said: "I saw the Prophet ﷺ go up the pulpit and loudly say: 'Allah ﷻ praises Himself! Allah ﷻ praises Himself! Can you hear it?' He proceeded by reciting the verse:

﴿وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ وَالْأَرْضُ جَمِيعًا قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِسْمَةِ وَالسَّمَوَاتُ مَطْوِيَّاتٌ بِيَمِينِهِ سُبْحَنَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ﴾

﴿No just estimate have they made of Allah, such as is due to him: on the Day of Judgment the whole of the earth will be but His handful, and the heavens will be rolled up in His right hand: glory to Him! High is He above the partners they attribute to Him!﴾ (Az-Zumar:67)

"Allah ﷻ is saying, 'I am the Lord...I am the Exalted in Might...I am the irresistible... I am the Preserver of safety...I am the Magnificent...' (Imam Ahmad, *Al-Musnad*: 2/72)

Recite Allah's ﷻ Beautiful Names in crisis and try to ingrain them in your heart. Ibn Omar ﷺ said, "The Prophet ﷺ continued listing the Names of Allah ﷻ loudly until I saw the pulpit shake."

The pulpit, a wooden inanimate object shook at the mention of Allah's ﷻ Names. The Prophet ﷺ was steadfast, and because of the Prophet's ﷺ deep unshakeable trust in Allah's

ﷻ Magnificence, Might and Dominion, the wooden object shook. So, do not be confused. Remain calm and steadfast, for Allah ﷻ is with you. How can you be defeated while Allah's ﷻ Majesty and Perfection are with you?

It is our Fault!

Sometimes, we ask ourselves the question: "Why do Muslims suffer?" And since Allah ﷻ owns everything in this universe, why do Muslims experience one hardship after another? The same question was put years ago by the companions when the Muslims suffered heavy losses at Uhud Battle. They even ironically wondered, "What's this? The Prophet ﷺ is with us and we lost?" The reply came from Allah ﷻ to them and to us: *«Say, 'It is your fault.'»*

Of course, there will be martyrs and there will be bloodshed in the Way of Allah ﷻ, but it is just a wake-up call for every sleeper to get out of bed and see what is happening to him and to the nation.

And Allah ﷻ Will Make His Light Shine Through...

The Second Pillar: Islam is the most dominant religion:

﴿يُرِيدُونَ لِيُطْفِئُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ مُتِمُّ نُورِهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ

الْكَافِرُونَ﴾

(Their intention is to extinguish Allah's light (by blowing) with their mouths, but Allah will complete (the Revelation of) His light, even though the unbelievers may detest (it).﴾ (As-Saf:8)

This is exactly like trying to put one's hand in front of the sunlight to prevent the light from spreading through. This is also similar to a scene where everyone is sweeping the earth and trying to cloud the sky with dust. Can you believe it? Of course, you cannot. So, why can't you believe that Allah ﷻ is making His religion triumphant? It is His religion; He will support, protect and defend it.

Do you know what we are like? We are all like employees in a plant. We just work and earn wages. The plant remains the property of its owner.

Allah ﷻ Has Promised the Good People!

Ponder what Allah ﷻ says:

﴿وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ

الصَّالِحُونَ﴾

«Before this, we wrote in the Psalms, after the Message (given to Moses): My servants the righteous, shall inherit the earth.» (Al-Anbiyya:105) It is true we are Allah's ﷻ

Servants, but only the righteous among them are explicitly referred to in the verse.

﴿وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي
الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ
الَّذِي أَرْتَضَىٰ لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُم مِّن بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا
يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا﴾

«Allah has promised, to those among you who believe and work righteous deeds, that He will, of a surety, grant them in the land, inheritance (of power), as He granted it to those before them; that He will establish in authority their religion - the one which He has chosen for them; and that He will change (their state), after the fear in which they (lived), to one of security and peace: 'They will worship me (alone) and not associate aught with Me.» (An-Nur:55)

O Lord! Where is Your Promise? But also, where are the believers?

Be Among this Group!

Be confident that Islam will triumph because the Qur'an tells us this:

﴿كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَأَغْلِبَنَّ أَنَا وَرُسُلِي إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ﴾

«Allah has decreed: "It is I and My apostles who must prevail": for Allah is one full of strength, able to enforce His will.» (Al-Mujadila:21)

﴿إِنَّا لَنَنْصُرُ رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا﴾

«We will, without doubt, help Our apostles and those who believe.» (Ghafir:51)

Allah's ﷺ religion will triumph, but it will be clever if it comes from you! It will be great if triumph comes from you and during your lifetime, and greater if you are among the group about which the Prophet ﷺ said: "A group of my people will not cease to fight and conquer for the truth. Those who forsake them will not harm them, until the Day of Judgement." (Imam Ahmad, *Al-Musnad*:5/92-94 and al-Hakim, *al-Mustadrak*:4/449)

Be of this blessed group and stand firm in a period of crises until you see victory.

The Nation's Return to Allah ﷻ is the Greatest Asset

Never despair of Allah's ﷻ Support and the triumph of His religion. Despair and you will enter a dangerous zone, the zone of serious sins. Never despair even if victory comes after 100 years. After all, it is not your religion; it is Allah's ﷻ and He will make it triumph. However, this does not mean that you sit back and relax. Do your best and Allah ﷻ will finish the work. Bear in mind that people draw lessons from hardships. It is through periods of hardship, trials and tribulations that people turn to and know Allah ﷻ.

Many people realise that their suffering is linked to religious matters, and it is up to them to work hard and rip the fruits of their hard work.

Many people are increasing their optional worship (*Nawafil*) by fasting Mondays and Thursdays, reading the Qur'an and properly observing compulsory and optional acts of worship.

Many people realise that they are not doing enough for Allah ﷻ. They fear that they have nothing to present to Allah ﷻ on the Day of Judgment.

Many people start crying over their brothers and Muhammad ﷺ; whereas in the past, they used to cry over themselves or over trivialities.

Tears of mercy not failure!

We may shed so many tears crises, but they are not tears of failure. Rather, they are tears of love for the Muslims that

we sympathise with them. There is no shame in that, for the Prophet ﷺ did cry heavily over Hamza's ﷺ brutal killing to the point that the companions could hear his sobbing. So, his was not a crying of failure but of grief. When asked: "Do you cry, O Messenger of Allah?" He replied, "It (crying) is a mercy Allah ﷻ puts in the hearts of His Servants." Do you know what the Prophet ﷺ did afterwards? He stood up and told his companions: "Whoever of you believes in Allah ﷻ and the Last Day should follow me."

Never shed tears of failure. And if you do, it is better that you conceal them. But if you cry out of grief, then do it openly. Raise your head high and be confident that victory is forthcoming and that Allah ﷻ is supporting us.

Do you or do you not believe what the Prophet ﷺ said?

"Verily, Allah has folded the earth (i.e. has drawn together the ends of the entire earth) for me, and I saw its eastern and western parts, and verily the dominion of my nation will reach as far as what has been folded to me from it, and I have been granted the two treasures: the red (the gold i.e., the treasures of *kisra*) and the white (the silver, i.e. the treasures of Caesar)...." (Muslim:7187 and Tirmidhi:2176)

"There is not house be it in the city or the countryside but that this religion (Islam) will enter it." (Imam Ahmad, *al-Musnad*:4/103 and Al-Hakim, *al-Mustadrak*:4/430)

Do you understand what that means? Do you believe your Only Lord and your truthful Prophet? If you do, then expect victory!

The End of Time...not Quite Yet!

Some people claim that this is the end of time. They are wrong because the time will not end until Islam triumphs. The Anti-Christ (*Ad-Dajjal*) will not appear until Islam triumphs and rises high:

“The Hour will not be established until you fight with the Jews, and the stone behind which a Jew will be hiding will say: ‘O Muslim! There is a Jew hiding behind me, so kill him.’” (Muslim:7268).

When will that be? Your enemies have the answer. Golda Meyer, former Jewish Premier, was asked whether it is true that the Muslims would fight the Jews as expressed in the above hadith, she replied, “It may be true. But the hadith does not refer to the present time Muslims. When the number of those who observe *Salat al-Fajr* equals that of those who observe the Friday prayers, then fighting us will be attainable.”

This is a hard blow to every weak Muslim.

Beware worshipping Allah ﷻ on a verge!

The Third Pillar: Are you going to stand firm all the time, during and after adversity, or are you going to give up because the results are not as you have expected them to be? In other words, are you going to give up your worshipping simply because things aren't as you would want them to be? Bear in mind—as mentioned above—genuine hardship reveals the truest worshippers. It is true to say that the hearts are softer during crises, when people desperately need Allah ﷻ. But, does that mean we should relapse into our old habits once the crisis is lifted? The true worshipper worships Allah ﷻ at all times, be it prosperity or adversity. In contrast, those with shakeable trust in Allah ﷻ, those who hanker after life's splendours, and those who worship Allah ﷻ on a verge are shaken at even minor trial or test by Allah ﷻ:

﴿وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ عَلَى حَرْفٍ فَإِنْ أَصَابَهُ خَيْرٌ اطْمَأَنَّ بِهِ ۚ وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ فِتْنَةٌ انْقَلَبَ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ خَسِرَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةَ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ﴾

«There are among men some who serve Allah, as it were, on the verge: if good befalls them, they are, therewith, well content; but if a trial comes to them, they turn on their faces. They lose both this world and the Hereafter. That is loss for all to see.» (*Al-Hajj:11*)

In fact, Abu Bakr ؓ voiced it clearly to those who were shaken by the death of the Prophet ﷺ: "O people! Whoever used to worship Muhammad, then Muhammad has died now, but whosoever used to worship Allah ﷻ, then Allah ﷻ is immortal," and recited:

﴿إِنَّكَ مَيِّتٌ وَإِنَّهُمْ مَّيِّتُونَ﴾

«Truly you wilt die (one day), and truly they (too) will die (one day).» (Az-Zumar: 30)

﴿وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ أَفَإِنْ مَاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ
أَنقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِكُمْ ۚ وَمَنْ يَنْقَلِبْ عَلَىٰ عَقْبَيْهِ فَلَنْ يَضُرَّ اللَّهَ شَيْئًا
وَسَيَجْزِي اللَّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ﴾

«Muhammad is but a messenger, messengers (the like of whom) have passed away before him. Will it be that, when he dies or is slain, you will turn back on your heels? He who turns back doth no hurt to Allah, and Allah will reward the thankful.» (Al-Imran: 144)

Are You Going to Follow the Way of Iblis? What a Loss!

Allah's ﷻ confirms people's relapse into negligence, loss of confidence and hostility between weak Muslims:

﴿وَلَقَدْ صَدَّقَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِبْلِيسُ ظَنَّهُ فَاتَّبَعُوهُ إِلَّا فَرِيقًا مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾

«And on them did Satan prove true his idea, and they followed him, all but a party that believed.» (Saba:20)
What was his idea? Perform as many acts of worship as you please, but when the moment comes I will trap and lure you into my trap. I will ignite the fire of the greatest *fitna*, and then fuel it with hostilities and grudges between brothers in Islam. So, in genuine hardship, Iblis followers will be exposed and his prophesy fulfilled.

Dear young brother, are you going to give up your efforts to serve this religion? Dear mother, are you going to stop encouraging your children from observing congregational prayers and memorizing the Qur'an?

No Lord! We have paid a high price and we have learnt our lesson now!

Worship Your Lord until You Meet Him

What if the Muslim nation remained dead for 100 years? What is 100 years in the history of rise and fall of the nations? It is a drop in the ocean. In other words, this nation led the world for 1300 years –be optimistic- and so what will

happen if it collapses for 100 years? It will- by Allah's ﷻ. Leave- rise again and stand on its feet. It once collapsed for 90 years after the Crusades, and then rose again, strong, free and dignified. What does that mean? It means that the rise and fall, and hardship will not cripple my progress nor will it dash my hopes to forge ahead. What does it also mean? It means I should never give up worshipping Allah ﷻ until death. Memorise this spirit-booster verse:

﴿وَأَعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَكَ الْيَقِينُ﴾

﴿And serve your Lord until there come unto you the hour that is certain.﴾ (Al-Hijr:99)

It also means that if people give up, I shall not. I will stand firm on the truth regardless of whether or not I will rip the fruits of my work.

He Who is Unconcerned is not One of Them

The Fourth Pillar: Brotherhood is one of the tenets of Islam. Your brothers are the Muslims in every part of the globe. Never insult or hit another Muslim at a demonstration or a rally. The soldier may be your cousin and the police officer may be your uncle. Do not humiliate them. In fact, you are responsible for your comfort because they are your brothers and you should be concerned. If you do not defend your Muslim brother, you will be responsible for anything

bad that happens to him. Never turn your back and blame others. Note how serious () the tone of the following hadith is: "He who is not concerned with the matters of the Muslims, he is not considered one of them." (Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*:4/317)

Don't you know that "Whoever humiliates and refuses to support a Muslim while capable of helping him, shall be humiliated by Allah ﷻ in front of people on the Day of Judgment." (Ahmad, *al-Musnad*)

Can you handle these warnings? Can you tolerate not being one of the Muslims? If you can't bear it, then stick to your brotherhood toward the Muslims.

After Worshipping, Seek Allah's ﷻ Forgiveness

Obviously, you have been close to Allah ﷻ during the period of crises by performing acts of worship which sought Allah's ﷻ Support to the Muslims, etc. Now, end your worshipping with seeking Allah's ﷻ Forgiveness on their behalf. Allah ﷻ will not waste your efforts away:

﴿فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ﴾

﴿Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, see it!﴾ (Az-Zalzala:7)

If you don't do it and if you, instead, start harbouring grudges against your Muslim brothers, then the flame of *fitna* is rekindled, and only you will be the loser. Do not forget what Allah ﷻ says:

﴿وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا﴾

«And hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves.» (Al-Imran:103)

﴿وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًّا لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا﴾

«And leave not, in our hearts, rancour (or sense of injury) against those who have believed.» (Al-Hashr:10)

﴿وَلَا تَنَزَعُوا فِتْفَشُلُوا وَتَذْهَبَ رِجَاكُمْ﴾

«And fall into no disputes, lest you lose heart and your power depart.» (Al-Anfal:46)

Ease After Hardship

This is a permanent heavenly law. If you are weak and oppressed today, remember the glad tiding:

﴿وَنُرِيدُ أَنْ نَمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ﴾

«And we wished to be gracious to those who were being depressed in the land.» (Al-Qasas:5)

At the start, you are depressed, and then Allah ﷻ makes you:

﴿وَجَعَلَهُمْ أَيْمَةً وَنَجَعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ﴾

«...leaders (in Faith) and make them heirs.» (Al-Qasas:5)

However, victory comes after patience. So, be patient and know your map. Are you going to serve Islam and remain steadfast or are you going to support another cause and lose trust in Allah ﷻ:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مَا لَكُمْ إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ أَنْفِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

أَنَّا قُلْنَا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ أَرْضَيْتُمْ بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا مِنَ الْآخِرَةِ فَمَا مَتَّعُ

الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ﴾

«O you who believe! What is the matter with you, that, when ye are asked to go forth in the cause of Allah, you cling heavily to the earth? Do you prefer the life of this

world to the Hereafter? But little is the comfort of this life, as compared with the Hereafter.) (At-Tawba:38)

Never be content like those who say:

﴿رَضُوا بِأَنْ يَكُونُوا مَعَ الْخَوَالِفِ﴾

«They prefer to be with (the women), who remain behind (at home).» (At-Tawba:93)

And whose

﴿وَطَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ﴾

«...hearts are sealed.» (At-Tawba:93) and have become 'faith-proof'.

Be optimistic and renew your trust in Allah ﷻ. Carry the four pillars in your hearts and try to interact with them. Who knows that our crisis is the beginning of victory:

﴿فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا ﴿٥﴾ إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا﴾

«So, verily, with every difficulty, there is relief. Verily, with every difficulty there is relief.» (Ash-Sharh:5-6)

Religion is Advice

The Prophet ﷺ said: **"Religion is advice."** (Tirmidi:1927 and An-Nasai:4211)

But what does it mean? Advise your Muslim brothers for the sake of Allah ﷻ. Advise them in what? Advise them in any matter related to the reform of the Muslim nation and according to the law:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ﴾

«Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves.» (Ar-Ra'd:11)

One might ask how my advice will benefit the Muslim nation and how will it spread? By advising your Muslim brother, your advice will 'travel' among other Muslims by word of mouth. You receive a good piece of advice, do not 'hoard' it; diffuse it among other Muslims. This is how the entire Muslim nation will receive and benefit from it.

Prove your love for this religion

We, Muslims, haven't been singled out as the best nation for nothing. It is because of the mission of 'advice' assigned to us:

﴿كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ﴾

«You are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah.» (Al-Imran:110)

Beware during the execution of your mission, you may be ridiculed and even harmed. Do not give up and say to yourself: "I did it once, but they fired me from my job. I did it once, but people humiliated me." If you do, then it is the beginning of your despair. Again, if we don't stand in the face of situations like these and remain steadfast, how are we going to encourage ourselves and others to advise people? If we don't, how are we going to prove that we really love this religion?

Is There a Reward for Giving Advice?

You may not believe so, but there is indeed a reward for your efforts. Here is some evidence: The Prophet ﷺ said: "I was shown the first three to enter Paradise: the *Shaheed* (the martyr); the one who is chaste and proud; and the slave who worships Allah ﷻ with devotion and advises people." What a reward! One might ask, 'what about those who enter the mosque first for prayer?' Nobody denies that, but you have never given any advice to any Muslim for Allah's ﷻ Sake.

A companion said: "I gave the pledge of allegiance to the Prophet ﷺ for offering prayer perfectly, giving *Zakat* and giving good advice to every Muslim." (Al-Bukhari:57 and Muslim:197)

I Will Keep on Advising Until I Die

Imagine you and I were to pledge allegiance to the Prophet ﷺ, and he would reply by saying, 'On condition that you advise for Allah's ﷻ Sake', would you accept that? Would you accept to commit yourself to obeying Allah ﷻ and His Messenger? Here is the companion's reaction to the Prophet's ﷺ proposal: "I will keep on advising until I die."

Furthermore, the Prophet ﷺ said: "A servant who advises his master shall have two rewards." (Al-Bukhari:2546) What does this hadith imply? It implies that the Prophet ﷺ teaches us that the young should advise the old, the weak should

advise the strong, even if he were a slave, however humiliated and inferior he may be. The Prophet ﷺ teaches to advise our Muslim brothers and never feel intimidated to tell the truth.

Do not Expect any Good from a Nation Whose People do not Give Advice

Omar Ibn Al-Khattab ؓ said: "Do not expect any good from a nation whose people do not advise their Muslim brothers." In fact, he ؓ would welcome criticism: "May Allah ﷻ have mercy on whosoever points out my defects."

Brothers and sisters! Accept advice from whoever gives it. Accept criticism, for if you do, people would accept yours.

Some May Wonder, 'whom shall we advise?'

Reply by stating the Prophet's ﷺ hadith: "The *Deen* (religion) is *naseehah* (advice/sincerity)". We said 'To whom?' He said 'To Allah and His Book, and His Messenger, and to the leaders of the Muslims and their common folk.' (Tirmidi:1926) How do we advise for Allah's ﷻ Sake? We do that by extolling Allah ﷻ, complying with His Laws, and supporting His religion. How do we advise for the Prophet's ﷺ sake? We do that by loving, revering and defending him whether dead or alive. How do we advise for the Qur'an's sake? We do that by

using it as a source of reference for your advisory mission, reciting it to people and implementing it.

Start advising people today. Start by your family, neighbours, friends, students, colleagues, etc....Just as no good is expected from a nation whose people do not advise their Muslim brothers, no good is expected from people who reject advice either. Never think that advice is a reaction against you, directed at you in order to damage your reputation or underestimate you. On the contrary, an adviser is a loving person after all and wishes the good for you. Accept advice and do not be like those Allah ﷻ describes as:

﴿وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُ اتَّقِ اللَّهَ أَخَذَتْهُ الْعِزَّةُ بِالْإِثْمِ فَحَسْبُهُ جَهَنَّمُ وَلَيْسَ

الْمُهَادُ﴾

﴿When it is said to him, "Fear Allah, he is led by arrogance to (more) crime. Enough for him is Hell, an evil bed indeed (to lie on)!﴾ (Al-Baqara:206)

What Are the Conditions of Giving Advice?

First: Ensure the validity of the content of your advice.

Second: Have good intentions. In other words, be humble in giving advice and do not boast that you are more knowledgeable than people.

Third: Do not advise people openly. It is said that the believer advises and conceals people's defects; whereas, the hypocrite exposes and brands people he advises.

Fourth: Show kindness toward people you advise.

A man tried to advise Harun ar-Rashid but his tone was very harsh with him. Harun ar-Rashid was very calm. He asked the man nicely: "O brother! Are you better than Moses ﷺ?" "No." "Am I worse than Pharaoh?" "No." "So, if you are not better than Mosses ﷺ and I am not worse than Pharaoh, don't you know that Allah ﷻ said to Mosses:

﴿فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا لَّعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَى﴾

﴿"But speak to him mildly; perchance he may take warning or fear ((Allah))."﴾ (Ta-Ha:44)"

Our religion only accepts wisdom.

One day, Harun ar-Rashid passed by a shepherd and, noticing that the latter might want to speak to him, stopped. The shepherd said: "O Imam! I want to advise you but I fear you. If I don't advise you, I will fear for you, and fearing for you is more serious than fearing you because I love you."

The Rules of Giving Advice

Here are five rules to consider when giving advice:

- Kindness
- Secrecy
- Good intention
- Taking into account people's circumstances
- Conviction that people have defects

Respect these rules and make the following hadith constant in your mind:

The Prophet ﷺ said: "I was shown the first three to enter Paradise: the *Shaheed* (the martyr); the one who is chaste and proud; and the slave who worships Allah ﷻ with devotion and advises people."

Let's take a leaf from our ancestors' leaf. They used to advise one another and their success was a well-deserved one. It is high time we emulated them and retrieve that lost success and victory.

The Significance of Action and Technological Pursuit

Many are still wondering about the solution to our problems, and I am still insisting that we must change ourselves first. Do not expect to pick apples from a colocynth tree. In other words, if you wish to rip apples, sow the seeds of apples.

A nation that does not act will never change its situation

We discussed before the issue of knowledge which is only possible if accompanied by action. We discussed how a student's choice of the wrong discipline may affect his career in the years to come. We also discussed that illiteracy now is measured by how much computer knowledge you have rather than whether you know how to read and write. Yet, people still claim that backwardness is not in their hands. This is simply shifting the blame and responsibility to others and refusing to seek excellence and success.

The richest resources in the world!

Part of Allah's ﷻ Mercy is making the Muslim land the richest in resources in the world, and all that the Muslims

need to benefit from these resources is to work in order to develop these resources. Note this important, yet distressing piece of information:

Japan, alone, produces in one year only four times more than what the entire Islamic world, with all its oil and wealth, produces. This is a huge gap. Statistically, the total production in the entire Islamic world equals quarter of the production in Japan. This is despite the following facts and figures:

80% of the Japanese land consists of mountains and scattered islands.
Japan population is 20 million.

Japan's geographical location makes it prone to earthquakes and volcanoes.

Japan emerged from a destructive World War in less than half a century ago.

How come Japan today is one of the super powers in the world?

America comes first in the list of the most productive countries in the world, followed by Japan. Indonesia, a Muslim country, ranks 28. What about us? This is the peak of backwardness. We have become a nation dependent on the production of others, mere consumers.

Who has the solution?

Do not pin the blame on the government, for we are more to blame than it is. Both the problem and solution are in our hands, but we are lazy. We must throw the fetters of laziness and be serious. Of course we are lazy when an Arab employee works an average of 12 to 13 minutes per day; whereas, in the West the average is between 8 to 10 hours. Isn't that appalling and alarming?

Some of you may feel jealous now and be moved by these startling facts. Others may shrug off the reality and content themselves by saying that the developed countries have their own potentials and we have ours. We must reject this way of thinking and be confident that production is part of our religion as outlined by the hadith which says: "Work is worship." A person who sleeps late, wakes up late, goes to work late and does not exercise will never change his life for the better, let alone participating in the progress of his nation.

Sheikh Sha'rawi said: "He who does not eat of the fruit of his sweat does not decide by himself." How can he decide while he eats of the fruits of others' hard work and sweat?

The Art of Cheating!

How can a nation progress while employees at work and students at college learn the art of cheating instead of learning the art of productivity? When caught and blamed,

those who cheat at work have the undemanding answer: "We can only work according to the pay we receive." This is a breach of the terms and conditions of the contract because an employee reads and accepts the terms and conditions by signing it. So, any cheating on his part is a breach of contract.

There are two types of men in our society: a man who refuses to work because it does not match suit his interests, and a man who does a job because he is forced to do it, and so does not from his heart. Both men will not guide their nation to success or excellence.

Do you see our situation today? It is far worse than it was before. Allah ﷻ has given us everything but we don't benefit from anything. When do we get rid of our downright laziness and lethargy?

Why Such Laziness and Dependence?

Our land produces excellent raw material. This means that we have resources, and we also have brainpower. But, why do we export it at a very low price, and then buy it as manufactured products at a very high price? This is because we are lazy and because we still have some people whose prime concern is to please their director rather than expand his inventive ambitions.

The Prophet ﷺ entered the mosque at a non-praying time and found Abu Umama ؓ there. He asked him, 'What are you

doing here at this hour?' 'Debts and grief...' The Prophet ﷺ taught him the following *du'a*: '*Allahuma inni a'uzu bika mina alhammi wahuzni wa a'uzu bika min al'ajzi wal kasal* (My Lord, I take refuge in You from grief and I take refuge in You from laziness and senility.) (Tirmidi:3503) We must take refuge in Allah ﷻ from laziness and senility, two dangerous diseases.

Some people now would prefer to remain unemployed rather than seek employment because they believe that their skills do not match the job market. Have they forgotten what Allah ﷻ says about earning a living?

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ ذُلُولًا فَامْشُوا فِي مَنَاكِبِهَا وَكُلُوا مِن رِّزْقِهِ ۚ وَإِلَيْهِ النُّشُورُ﴾

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ ذُلُولًا فَامْشُوا فِي مَنَاكِبِهَا وَكُلُوا مِن رِّزْقِهِ ۚ وَإِلَيْهِ النُّشُورُ﴾

«It is He who has made the earth manageable for you, so traverse yeou through its tracts and enjoy of the sustenance which He furnishes, but unto Him is the Resurrection.» (Al-Mulk:15)

﴿وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنَّاكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَعِيشًا ۚ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ﴾

﴿وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنَّاكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَعِيشًا ۚ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ﴾

«It is We who have placed you with authority on earth, and provided you therein with means for the fulfillment of your life. Small are the thanks that you give.» (Al-A'raf:10)

﴿فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ

وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ﴾

«And when the prayer is finished, then may you disperse through the land, and seek of the bounty of Allah. And celebrate the praises of Allah often (and without stint) that you may prosper.» (Al-Jumu'a:10)

Note how Allah ﷻ invites people to worship and seek a living in the land. He ﷻ is telling us, do not sit and wait for provision to come to you. Get up and work for it. Note also what He ﷻ says in the following verse on *Qiyam Al-Layl* (night prayer):

﴿عَلِمَ أَنْ سَيَكُونُ مِنْكُمْ مَرْضًى ۖ وَآخَرُونَ يَضْرِبُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ

يَبْتَغُونَ مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ ۖ وَآخَرُونَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ﴾

«He knows that there may be (some) among you in ill-health; others travelling through the land, seeking of Allah's bounty; yet others fighting in Allah's Cause.» (Al-Muzammil:20)

Careful! This is not an exemption from performing night prayers, but a confirmation of the importance of work, activity and seeking provision.

They do not practice what they preach!

Some Muslims misinterpret Islamic teachings and claim that they are going to devote their time and energy to worship without earning a living. If these people claim they *really* follow in the footsteps of the Prophet ﷺ and his companions, haven't they realized that the companions were involved in different occupations? Is it wrong or unlawful to take up a job? Is the doctor who cures the diseased or lessens their pain does not do anything good? Isn't his work part of good deeds? Allah ﷻ says:

﴿اعْمَلُوا ءَالَ دَاوُدَ شُكْرًا وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّاكِرِينَ﴾

«"Work you, sons of Daud, with thanks! But few of My servants are grateful!"» (Sabaa:13)

Believe me! If we invent and do our jobs skillfully, all our working hours will transform into hours of good deeds. Your work must be sincere and made to serve the Muslim nation.

In fact, the most revered companions earned a living:

Omar Ibn al-Khattab ؓ used to take turns with a man from the *Ansar* to look after a plot of land. So, he would work one day in the land, and would meet with the Prophet ﷺ every other day. Omar ؓ would meet with the man and ask him to teach him what he had done with the land, and would teach the man what he had learnt from the Prophet ﷺ.

Abu Bakr ؓ, whose faith equals that of an entire nation, donated all his wealth to the Muslims three times: on the day of *al-Hijra* (emigration), during the preparations for *Tabuk Battle*, and during the wars of apostasy (*hurub ar-Ridda*). Abu Bakr ؓ was a serious businessman.

Without their lucrative business, Othman Ibn Affan ؓ and Abdurrahmane Ibn Awf would have never funded so many expeditions and would not deserve to receive the glad tiding of Paradise.

In fact, part of Omar's ؓ wish was: "*Allahumma rzukni shahadatan fi sabili Allah aw sa'iyyan fi talabi ar-rizq* (O Allah! Cause me to die as a martyr or as a provision seeker.)"

By Allah ﷻ! If we sincerely rely on Allah ﷻ, He shall give us provision like He ﷻ does with birds. They go with their bellies empty and come back with their bellies full, as the Prophet ﷺ said.

Do you wish to be like the blind bird?

A man who lived during the lifetime of Ibrahim Ibn Adham decided to abandon work for worshipping, and set out on a journey in the desert. On his way, he came across a blind bird and was curious about how the bird would feed itself. Moments later, he found out that another bird would feed it. This experience raised his confidence and conviction to abandon work for worshipping since provision would be guaranteed. He related the story of the bird and his intention to give up work and devote his life to worshipping to Ibrahim Ibn Adham who frowned on the idea, advising him: "Do you really wish to be like the blind bird? The upper hand is better than the lower hand." Work is worship, yet do not give up praying for work nor giving up work for worshipping.

Here are some examples of the Prophet's ﷺ encouragement of people to work:

The Prophet ﷺ once shook someone by the hand and felt some roughness in the hand, then said to the man: "This is a hand that Allah ﷻ loves."

"The truthful and trustworthy businessman will be with the Prophets, truthful and martyrs in Paradise." (Tirmidi:1209)

"If any Muslim plants something or sows seed from which a man, a bird or an animal eats, it counts as a charity for him." (Imam Ahmad, *Al-Musnad*:4/55)

"Allah ﷻ loves the working believer." (Al-Mundiri, *At-Tarhib* and *at-Tarhib* 2/524)

In fact, Omar ؓ used to tour the mosques to see who would go there at non-praying times. If he ever found people sitting down, he would ask, 'what are you doing here?' 'We are seeking provision.' He would get his stick and start chasing them out of the mosque. 'Do not sit and wait for provision to come to you. Get out and look for it.'

Do not be like the blind bird, but be like the bird that would feed it. Allah ﷻ imposes tax on frozen funds not active ones.

Here is also what the Prophet ﷺ said about benefitting from local products: "The best food is that which you make by your hands." (Imam Ahmad, *Al-Musnad*:4/131-132) Remember that our Renaissance depends on being sincere in our jobs. It is only through honesty and discipline that other nations have raised high. Raise your working hours, increase your productivity, and you will see the result of your work. And whoever does not find what suits him, let him learn and practice something new.

And finally remember my advice: We will not change for the better so long as we depend on others for our provision.

Set Your Goal

Do You Have a Goal in Life?

If you have a goal in life, you will be serious about achieving no matter what. If you have a goal in life, you will do your job skillfully, increase your productivity, realize the true value of time, worship Allah ﷻ properly and avoid falling into sins. If you have a goal in life, you will achieve it while happy. Do thousands of people exist just to eat, drink, go out, and have children, without having a definite goal in life? The answer to this question turns out to be a very depressing one.

The Story of a Young Boy!

This young boy was forced to go to school because he did not like it from the very beginning, and he would most of the time play truants and miss classes. He would only open his books and revise his lessons only at his parents' presence to escape punishment. He reached secondary school, high school, and then went to university. After four years of study, he graduated with distinction. He soon found a job in a company and had an income. He then got married because everyone was married, had children and kept on working to

support his family until he died. What he did was not bad but what he did was goalless because he did not achieve anything in his life. Let's go back to the question I asked at the outset: What is your aim in life? My aim is to work in a decent company. Working for a decent company is a means, and so is marriage.

These are means not ends. A life without aim is depressing and boring. The person who lives a happy and tasty life is the person who has a clear and set goal.

Teach Your Children to Set Their Goals From Early Childhood!

As young as seven, children in America and foreign schools have a class every week which they consider very important. The subject is: "Set your goals in life." It is only normal that children at this age do not know the meaning of a philosophical question such as this one. However, it is just brainstorming at this age. Gradually, children will realize its importance. For instance, each pupil is required to look for a goal in life during the academic year and presents it to the instructor. Just before the summer vacation, instructors write to parents to inform them of what their children have chosen and suggest that they do a follow-up on their children's choice.

Parents! Your role isn't just feeding your children's bellies and waking them up for school. This is not education; this is upbringing. Education means asking your son his interest

and guiding him to set his goal in life. Sorry to say that a person who exists just for the sake of eating, drinking, sleeping, getting married and having children, then dying is like an animal who has been created for these goals.

Why Were You Created?

This question has puzzled philosophers and researchers for so many years, but Islam has a clear answer for it. Plato, for instance, claimed that Allah ﷻ created the universe but forgot about it. In response, Allah ﷻ says:

﴿وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ نَسِيًّا﴾

﴿And Your Lord never forgets.﴾ (Maryam:64)

Karl Marx, after him, found a very *strange* answer: Allah ﷻ created the universe to play with. In response, Allah ﷻ:

﴿أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ﴾

﴿"Did you then think that we had created you in jest, and that you would not be brought back to us (for account)?"﴾ (Al-Muminun:115)

Ilya Abu Madi composed a long poem entitled *At-Talasim* which says:

Why were we created in this life?

*I don't know where I come from, but I came
I saw before me a path and I walked
I will carry on walking whether I like it or not
How I came, I don't know
Where I go, I don't know
Why I came, I don't know*

Only the Qur'an has the answer:

﴿وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ﴾

«I have only created Jinn and men, that they may serve Me.» (Ad-Dariyaat:56)

But what does that mean? Does it mean worshipping Allah ﷻ all the time? No. Live a normal life, but make pleasing Allah ﷻ your supreme goal. Live a normal life, but keep your mind preoccupied with the fact that Allah ﷻ is the Lord of everything on earth and that what you do is for Allah's ﷻ Sake.

What about you sister? Why do you have children? Is it to play with and cuddle? No. You have children so that you raise and teach them to obey Allah ﷻ and to worship Him so that when they grow up, they will benefit the Islamic society.

Every minute you spend on your children's upbringing is a kind of worship. For every portion of suckling you give for the sake of worshipping, you earn a reward.

What is the Purpose of Having Money?

Perhaps the commonest answer to this question will be: to buy things I need, to go shopping and to enjoy life in general. If this is your answer, then you haven't attained the goal for which you exist. You should say, instead: If I have money, I will spend it in the Cause of Allah ﷻ, and on providing an Islamic education for my children. If I have money, I will help the poor and needy. If your money is spent in this way, then every penny you spend is an act of worship.

Brothers and sisters! We are not going to last long. So, why don't we use our remaining days in worshipping and pleasing Allah ﷻ. With this light you will see your goal clearly. Do you know now why you have been created? You have been created to know and worship Allah ﷻ.

The Types of Goals in Your Life

There are three types of goals:

Bad goal: The worst of them is to meet a girl, marry and live for her sake, and try hard to get her attention.

Good but temporal goal: To raise your children until they become adults. But this aim is temporal because when you turn sixty, and your children become independent, your life ends there. Your children won't look after you because they haven't been taught how. You haven't taught them values, you just provided food for them. This time is crucial in your life because you will get bored and start killing time. You may even end up in elderly homes.

Ambitious and ongoing goal: This is the ideal goal because you raise your children in an Islamic way and you have nothing to fear. Even if they become independent adults, they will give you back the love you have given them when they were little. These children will recognize the importance of the following verse:

﴿وَأَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا ۚ وَالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا﴾

«Serve Allah, and do not join any partners with Him; and do good to parents.» (An-Nisa:36)

As you can see from this classification, worldly goals are temporal, but what remains are those which are linked to Allah ﷻ.

Examples of Ambitious Goals

On his deathbed, a scholar was unconscious for a while then woke up and found one of his students by the side of the bed. He told him, 'Write what I will dictate.' The student replied, 'You are tired teacher. What is it that you want me to write?' 'May be it will benefit some Muslim and may be it will be a cause for us to enter Paradise.'

Omar Ibn Abdulaziz ؓ was the embodiment of ambition. He said: 'I have an ambitious spirit. I once wished I could marry the Caliphate's daughter, and I did. I once wished I could be the governor of Madina and I was. I once wished I could be the Caliphate, and I did. Today my ambition is to end up in Paradise.' He kept on working for it.

When Muhammad Al-Fatih conquered Constantinople, he was only 23. But, he used to ride his horse at the age of 15 and hide in the sea. He would be caught in the sea and sent back. He persisted for 8 years and eventually conquered it. He had a set goal and he managed to attain it.

Al-Bukhari was only 14 when he was at a gathering of prominent scholars and heard two scholars agonizingly talking about the books of hadiths which contained weak and authentic traditions. They wished someone could volunteer to collect authentic hadiths only. He jumped to the offer and after years of hard work, he produced *Sahih Al-Bukhari*. He set a goal and he attained it.

Charlie Chaplain had a dream of being the greatest cinema personality. He would sleep with the light on, and "whenever an idea came to my mind, I would wake up and note it down at anytime. "

Imagine, Al-Bukhari said the same thing: "I would wake up in the night more than 20 times to write down a hadith that I remembered."

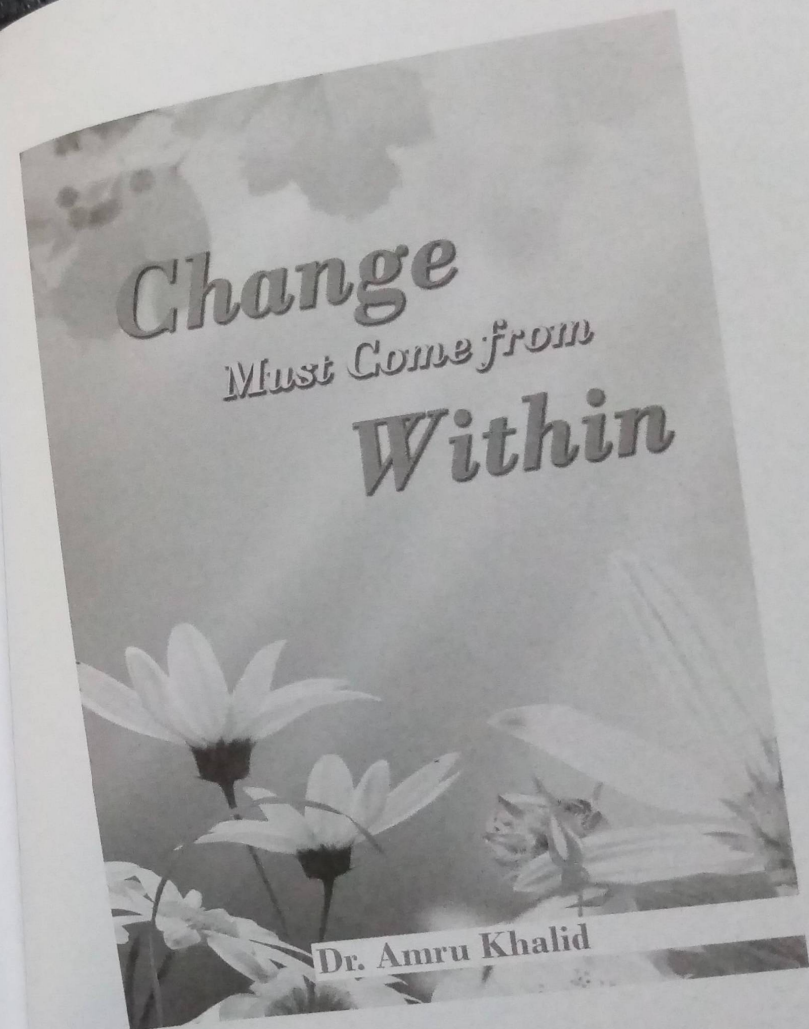
These people have strong will, and you will not strengthen your will unless you preoccupy your mind and heart with a great goal.

The Conditions of Achieving Goals

According to scholars, goals are attainable if you follow the following steps:

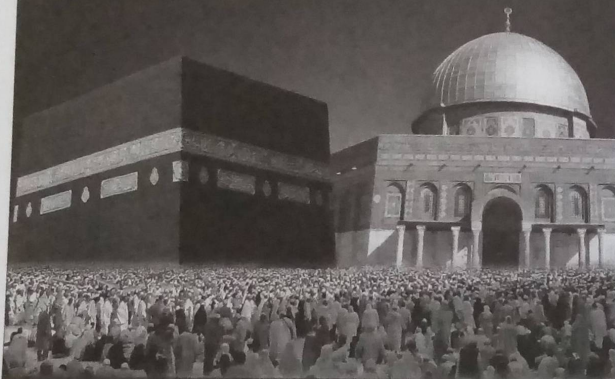
- Have a clear goal.
- Have an ongoing goal, one that is linked to Allah ﷻ.
- Do not fear obstacles
- Have an action plan for reaching our goal.
- Exert real efforts.
- Be hopeful and optimistic.
- Be patient! Be patient!

History tells us that great men followed these steps and achieved their goals. Why can't you?



Al-Mahdī

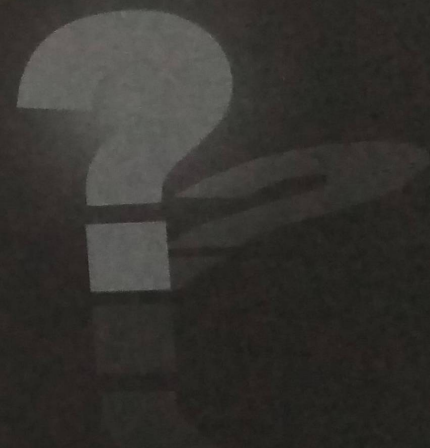
TRUTH OR FICTION?



MUHAMMAD AHMAD BIN ISMA'IL
AL-MUQADDAM

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ARE WE MUSLIMS



Shaiikh Muhammad Qutb

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About the Book

The trials and tribulations that are gripping the Islamic world have created a sense of loss and disorientation not only in the heart of the ordinary Muslim, but also in the heart of the people of wisdom.

What shall we do to overcome this hardship? How shall we rescue ourselves? How can we change this situation and where will this change come from?

Do not fall into despondency, and do not wash your hands of seeking change, for there is still light at the end of the tunnel. Hope exists in each of us. We must recover from our disease and we must have a role to play amongst the nations.

Each of us must contribute to this process of curing and revitalizing the Muslim nation according to his potentials, for I am confident that each individual will succeed in doing so.



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